

A HISTORY OF CULTURE CONTACT IN
NORTH-EASTERN NEW CALEDONIA 1774-1870

by

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This thesis is my own work based upon original research undertaken while a Research Scholar in the Pacific History Department, Research School of Pacific Studies, Australian National University.

Bronwen Douglas

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NOTE ON SPELLING

The student of New Caledonia has to cope with the absence of standardization, even in recent scholarly works, in the French rendition of New Caledonian names (e.g., Wagap compared with Houailou), and the tortuous spelling imposed by the transliteration of New Caledonian sounds into French orthography (e.g. Hienghène, Pouébo, Houailou, Tchambouenne, which are rendered phonetically as Yengen, Pwebo, Wailu, Cambwen). As far as possible, without causing confusion by the juxtaposition of different versions of the same word, I have attempted to use a simplified phonetic spelling for indigenous names, except when actually referring to a place or person at the present time, when I have used the modern French form. This phonetic spelling makes no allowance for local variations in the pronunciation of specific sounds, or for nuances which are not readily expressed in a Europeanized spelling of native sounds. This is because I believe it to be essential in a linguistically non-specialist work, and in the absence of uniformity, to achieve a balance between accuracy, clarity and simplicity. In outline the system I have used is as follows:

<u>French</u>	<u>International Phonetic Alphabet</u>	<u>B.D.</u>
a	a	a
é	e	e
è	ɛ	e
i	i	i
o	ɔ } o }	o
ou	u	u
di	dʒ	j
[h]ou + vowel	w	w
[h]i + vowel	j	y
tch	tʃ	c

N.B. I have adopted a general rule of including accents in French quotations, even when they were omitted in the original, in the belief that their omission generally reflected carelessness or haste rather than genuine idiosyncrasies of style. In all other respects quotations reproduce the exact wording of the original.

ERRATA

p. iii, 1.8

Chapter IV

p. vi,

insert after 1.14¹

The consonants b, bw, d, j, g are all prenasalised and thus do not need to be preceded by m or n. This correction is to apply, where appropriate, to the spelling of Melanesian names throughout the text. Hence, e.g.,

Yabe, Cabwen, Bode, Tijin.

g corresponds to the sound of ng in finger, e.g. Yegen.

ng corresponds to the sound of ng in singer, e.g., Mwelebeng.

The symbol q is used to indicate whether a spelling sequence of three identical vowels is to be pronounced as long plus short or short plus long, e.g., Caaqac.

The spelling of the following Melanesian names is to be amended throughout the text:

Bwaivat	for	Bwaibat
Duui	for	Dwi
Goa	for	Gwa
Kavarik	for	Kabarik
Kwenyi	for	Kunye
Paaqak	for	Paak
Tadin	for	Tindin
Temelin	for	Temeline
Vadeku	for	Vendegu
Wegoa	for	Wegwa

¹ I am indebted to Professor K. J. Hollyman for suggesting most of the following amendments to my rendition of Melanesian names.

between pp. 1-2	Balavio for Baladio on map
p. 6, 1.11	were for was
p. 35, n. 87, 1.11	Guiart 1957a
n. 88, 1.2	Guiart 1957a
p. 37, n. 92	Guiart 1957a
p. 44, 1.6	missing for mission
p. 56, 1.1	insert and after prestige
p. 58, n. 45, 1.1	unwillingness to
p. 60, n. 49, 1.1	insert la before propagation
p. 84, 1.4	occurred
1.16	insert western before Pacific
p. 88, 1.18	has for had
p. 106, 1.20	interference for inference
p. 108, last line	were for was
p. 122, 1.8	arms trade
p. 123, 1.13	claimed
p. 131, 1.1	as for a
p. 133, 1.5	swiftly
p. 152, 1.9	on for of
p. 153, 1.14	insert n. 33 after apologist
1.16	omit n. 33 after letters.
p. 161, 1.8	incomplètes
p. 171, last line	décidé
p. 185, 1.7	change
p. 188, 1.4	à for a
1.9	insert [sic] after soutenaient

p. 199, n. 7, 1.1	Gufart 1957a
p. 200, n. 13, 1.5	Mathieu
p. 203, 1.12	ont for ait
p. 209, 1.7	eastern for western
p. 210, n. 43, last line	insert l' before expatriation
p. 218, 1.17	peloton
p. 219, 1.5	was for were
p. 223, 1.17	insert to after fled
p. 224, 1.4	insert [sic] after Villars
p. 230, 1.19	of for on
p. 245, 1.21	Mwelebeng
p. 254, n. 4, 1.2	insert 1867 after Nov.
p. 262, 1.9	chastised
p. 264, 1.14	se concerter
p. 278, 1.1	insert square brackets - [the Mwelebeng]
1.16	ayant for avant
p. 279, 1.11	infamie for infame
p. 300, 1.13	subsistance
p. 319, n. 16, 1.7	du Bouzet
p. 322, last line	French
p. 335, 1.9	Duuima for Dwima
p. 352, 1.8	omit comma after regions
p. 360, 1.3	omit which
p. 364, 1.12	terrain ruraux [sic]
p. 377, 1.12	lais sée

1.23	insert [sic] after devienne
p. 380, 1.10	suffisante
p. 393, 1.13	'minuscule'
1.20	has for had
p. 394, 1.13	were for was a
1.14	contributions
	ones
p. 396, 1.9	irresistible
p. 398, 1.20	depredations
p. 399, 1.3	obsessed with for fixated on
p. 409, 1.9	were for was
p. 411, 1.7	omit authority
p. 427, 1.19	Ministre
p. 444, 1.30	1877 for 1777
1.33	1953 for 1853

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INTRODUCTION

THIS work is a study of interaction and change. The central theme is interaction between members of two entirely different cultural groups, Melanesians of New Caledonia and the Europeans with whom they came into contact between 1774 and 1870. Within this theme the main focus of attention is the impact of culture contact on Melanesian social organization, attitudes and way of life during the period of intensive contact after 1843. The process was reciprocal and to some extent self-generating, since the attitudes and reactions of Europeans to the indigenous society helped determine their actions and policies. The broad process of culture contact between Melanesians and Europeans was the most dramatic, but by no means the only important process of interaction during this period, and its course was deeply affected by relationships within as well as between each of the two great cultural groups. Different groups of Melanesians reacted in different ways to the challenge of European encroachment, while the interaction of indigenous groups in the context of culture contact was of profound, if not always discernible, relevance. Similarly, the attitudes, aims, methods and mutual relationships of various categories of European differed, and evoked a variety of Melanesian reactions. Of prime importance in this

regard was the relationship after annexation in 1853 between the French colonial authorities and the Roman Catholic missionaries, who had settled in the archipelago ten years earlier. The ramifications of this interaction were far-reaching, especially in the 1860's when a bitter conflict over ecclesiastical jurisdiction and control of Melanesians developed under the administration of an anticlerical governor, Charles Guillain.

These considerations determined my mode of approach and the methodology adopted. New Caledonia has been virtually untouched by historians and by all but a few social scientists, and there exist almost no adequate regional or thematic studies on which to base a comprehensive general history. The scope of this work is therefore narrow, but is not for that reason arbitrary.

To Melanesians the local or regional context was all important, because it formed the effective horizons of their existence. As far as New Caledonia was concerned, the same was basically true of the Europeans, explorers, traders and missionaries, who visited its shores or established a foothold there in the period before annexation. After 1853, however, each locality or region increasingly became a segment of a whole as far as administrators and missionaries, and to a lesser extent colonists, were concerned. If the study is to be truly one of interaction on several levels, it would be both artificial and misleading to limit consideration of

official and missionary policies after 1853 to a particular region. By the same token, however, a detailed regional study of the impact on small groups of Melanesians of the various types of interaction outlined above seems likely to be particularly profitable. I have therefore combined the two approaches: i.e., an intensive regional study of Melanesian participation in the process of culture contact before 1870 is combined with and considered in the light of a broader examination of European involvement during the same period. A unifying theme is provided by an analysis of the acculturation in two vital areas of Melanesian society, the structure of authority and land tenure.

The region chosen is in the far north-east of the main island. It extends from the lower Yengen valley to the northernmost tip, and inland along the Diahot valley to the upper valleys of the Wayem, Yengen and Tangen rivers. My choice was determined by several considerations. In the first place, a degree of traditional unity existed because the clans and tribes of the region all belonged to one or other of two geographically permanent and mutually antagonistic alliance groups, which is not to suggest that the region was in any sense artificially isolated from the rest of New Caledonia. Moreover the region includes the localities where the first contacts between New Caledonians and Europeans took place; where the Marist missionaries first settled, achieved their earliest converts and met their most

steadfast and violent opposition; where some of the earliest regular contacts between European sandalwood traders and New Caledonian occurred; where annexation was first proclaimed and some of the hardest battles of the early colonial period were fought. The colonial government worked out in this region many of its attitudes towards both New Caledonians and the Marist missionaries, and implemented policies for the control, supervision and resettlement of Melanesians which were later to be extended throughout the archipelago. It remains today one of the major areas of Melanesian settlement.

The regional analysis is subdivided into four related case studies, each of which concentrates on a single tribe or group of tribes during a particular portion of the overall time-span: the Puma of Balad between 1774 and 1855; the Bwarat of Yengen between 1856 and 1859; the Mwelebeng of Pwebo between 1860 and 1868; several inland tribes between 1868 and 1870. The experiences of each tribe or group of tribes during the contact period differed, and they responded in various ways, depending on their traditional situation, the particular form which European contact took, and the specific problems encountered. Each adopted different solutions, and some were more successful than others. Each chronological subdivision indicates roughly a period during which the tribe or tribes in question in some sense occupied the centre of the stage. It is by no means rigid, and

constant interaction occurred between the various tribes during the period of study, or at least became apparent after intensive contact began in 1843.

As far as the overall time-span is concerned, the period 1774-1870 has a certain unity, both in respect of the particular region and for the archipelago as a whole. 1774 was the year in which occurred the first known contact between New Caledonians and Europeans; 1870 marks the end of a period during which the region studied was probably the single most important part of the colony, from the point of view of race relations, missionary success and failure, extension of administrative control, and often violent contact within as well as between the two great interacting cultural groups. 1870 is also an important line of demarcation in the general administrative and mission history of the colony. It marked the end of a long governorship during which French control was consolidated, Melanesian opposition suppressed, the convict system established, colonization extended and future policies, especially those dealing with Melanesians, were delineated. For the mission, 1870 marked the end of an acrimonious eight-year struggle with the civil authorities over its role in the colony, and its position vis-à-vis Melanesians.

As had already been suggested, the study of European involvement concentrates on the attitudes and policies of colonial administration and Marist mission, both

in their direct impact on Melanesian society, and in their interaction and its effects. The process of culture change is examined in relation to two of the most important aspects of Melanesian society, the structure of authority within tribes and clans, and land tenure. In both cases the assumptions and interaction of the Europeans involved determined their policies and the changes they attempted to implement; in both cases European assumptions were affected by what they believed to be or claimed to believe to be the nature of the traditional system.

ON the question of sources, the work suffers from the lack of local administrative records, which I was flatly informed in Nouméa 'no longer exist'. Thus for the viewpoint of the colonial administration I was forced to rely almost entirely on material in French archives and on official publications of the New Caledonian government. The French archival material has occasional lacunae, notably during the period of Guillain's governorship. This is doubly unfortunate because of the need for comprehensive official records against which to balance the Marist account of the mission/government conflict of this era. My discussion of this conflict is unavoidably weighted, in terms of volume of source material, in favour of the mission. It is often difficult to pronounce with any certainty on Guillain's actions and motives, and those relatively few of his letters and reports which are still extant must perforce bear a heavier burden of proof than

perhaps they warrant.

I have not used oral testimony to any great extent. The length of time from the actual events under consideration and the stresses of the colonial period have combined to erase memories of many of the events in which I am interested. This is especially true of the north-east, which was one of the first areas to be evangelized and colonized, and where these processes were frequently connected with bitter clashes with the colonial authorities, in which the Melanesians ultimately fared badly. This has caused reluctance on the part of many people to discuss with strangers events of the colonial period, whilst many young people appear to take the attitude that the recent past was a period of oppression of Melanesian by European and is therefore best forgotten. Similarly, there is often embarrassment, lack of interest and impatience with the traditional past, and old men frequently complain that the young do not care about their heritage, and in some cases want actively to forget it.

I gleaned comparatively little information on events and specific incidents from New Caledonian informants, but much that is useful in the way of clan, place and personal names, lists of traditional alliances and enmities, migration itineraries, short genealogies and so on, all of which are invaluable when used in conjunction with published material, collections of legends and traditions and the archival and manuscript sources to which I have had access.

CHAPTER I

THE SOCIETY

IT is self-evident that any attempt to reconstruct definitively the nature of the cultural mores and social organization of the indigenous people of New Caledonia at or immediately before the first known contact with Europeans is either doomed to failure or delusive. The situation is especially difficult because the first arrivals directly affected only a small number of people, while the period of early, superficial contact began at different times in different areas, and lasted over the group as a whole for more than sixty years. More intensive contact began in several areas in the 1840's, but some inland, mountain tribes remained isolated and in many ways unaffected by European influence until the end of the nineteenth century.¹ The area under consideration in this study includes the extreme example of both types: Balad, where the earliest known contacts occurred, and Webia, where as late as 1898 there survived in isolated pockets elements of a way of life, social organization and material culture which were elsewhere greatly modified.² It is essential to be aware of the

¹ Durand 1900.

² Ibid.

variations possible in contact situations in New Caledonia, some of which were obviously inherent in the European participants and in considerations of time and place, while others stemmed from social and cultural differences between indigenous groups.³ Such differences were regional rather than local, and general tendencies can be traced throughout the group. Some dissimilarities were obvious, however, between the northern and southern extremities, between the east and west coasts of the main island, and between coastal and inland areas.⁴ The most important variable in the indigenous situation, one which was often not apparent to early European observers, was political, and resulted from local differences in the power, influence and authority of groups and their leaders. Traditionally these attributes varied widely from place to place, and within and between groups, while in any locality the potential for change in this respect during seventy years was considerable, especially in an area of relatively high instability of local groups like the east coast.⁵

Although a complete reconstruction of the traditional society and culture at a particular point in time is

³
Métais 1953b:171.

⁴
Montrouzier 1860: 37; Leenhardt 1946:xviii. Cf. Brou 1970:75-

⁵
Guiart 1953.

unattainable, there are some aspects about which much is known, at least in certain regions. Here literate and often interested and intelligent witnesses recorded their observations with some sympathy for the people concerned, and in many cases a scientific curiosity which compensated with accuracy in description for frequent inadequacies in attempted analysis. The most important of these aspects was religion. Most missionaries made at least some effort to record the more obvious observances, if only for their antiquarian value. Moreover, some missionaries had a genuine and often scholarly interest in the traditional practices and attitudes which they were in the process, they hoped, of changing irrevocably, and which a few were prepared to use as a basis for inculcating Christianity with as little trauma and as much continuity as possible. Notable in these respects were Lambert and Gagnière. The former's work on the Belep and the Isle of Pines was one of the first major publications in New Caledonian ethnography. Gagnière, who lived in close contact with the people of Balad and Pwebo from 1849, was largely responsible for the establishment of a fervent and enduring Christianity at Pwebo, and later began the conversion of the people of Bonde and Arama before his death in 1867. His knowledge and understanding of traditional religion in these areas was

6

Such as Gagnière, Lambert, Rougeyron, Goujon, Montrouzier; see below, pp. 211-13.

profound, and, since they went beyond a mere catalogue of practices and ritual, gave him great insight into indigenous motivations and attitudes, which he used with success in the propagation of the faith.

Another area in which much is known, although there are significant lacunae, is material culture: descriptions of artefacts, of the construction of huts and canoes, of agricultural techniques, were fairly common,⁷ and a reasonably complete picture of such objects and activities can be built up, with the aid of the various ethnographic collections. Generally the symbolic importance of the ritual involved in these activities was not recognized by the casual observer, but in this respect the records left by the more interested of the missionaries and the works of twentieth-century ethnographers are valuable. Material culture was almost invariably one of the areas most immediately affected by European contact, indirect as well as direct. Thus, iron tools, European cloth and utensils supplanted traditional implements, bark cloth and pottery almost at once, and with intensive contact the art of making these tended rapidly to fall into decay, and even to be lost. It was reported in 1898, however, that the Tea Janu of Webia still used traditional weapons,⁸ while everywhere techniques of construction,

7

O'Reilly 1955:130-3.

8

Durand 1900:514.

agriculture, fighting and so forth tended to change slowly, even though new implements were used, especially when the symbolic importance of a particular method was great.

For the historian of the period of European contact and penetration in a pre-literate society the most important aspects of the traditional situation are related to social, political and economic organization, and yet here reconstruction is difficult. The earliest Europeans known to have visited parts of New Caledonia rarely stayed long enough or had sufficient command of local languages to gain any but a superficial impression, which was generally interpreted in terms of and deeply coloured by their own social and cultural background, their outlook and motivations. Even those people, residents in a tribe, missionaries, settlers and local representatives of the colonial authorities, who lived for a time amongst or in close proximity to New Caledonians, and who had a greater or lesser command of their language, rarely had the training, inclination or objectivity to investigate such matters. Their records and observations are not for this reason valueless, but except for a few whose authors were especially interested and qualified, the value of such works is generally in the nature of providing corroborative evidence rather than direct testimony. Among the best early descriptions of social, political and economic organization in parts of New Caledonia are those written by a few missionaries, and by

several French naval doctors, who had lived for a time near one or more tribes, and were usually well-trained, intelligent observers.⁹ The earliest scholarly ethnographic publications were those of Lambert and Sarasin,¹⁰ but the most important such material is to be found in the works of the ethnographer/missionary, Maurice Leenhardt, and his pupils. Leenhardt, however, did not arrive in New Caledonia until the end of 1902, nearly 130 years after the first known contact, and more than sixty years after the beginning of intensive contact. Furthermore, his detailed knowledge and profound experience was based on his work in the Wailu valley, and in the areas of Protestant domination generally. The latter limitation applies to a lesser extent to the work of his most prominent pupils, Pierre Métais and Jean Guiart.

An attempt to gain an understanding of those areas of traditional New Caledonian society which are of most relevance to the historian of culture contact must, therefore, be based to some extent on detailed knowledge and observation of particular groups in the twentieth century. One must rely partly on inference, and would lay no claim to scientific exactitude. Nonetheless, the evidence available is sufficiently reliable and detailed to enable a general picture to be drawn

9

Pénard 1857; Rochas 1862; Vieillard et Deplanche 1863; Deplanche 1868-9; Bourgarel 1870; Patouillet 1872; Legrand 1893; Vincent 1895.

10

Lambert 1900; Sarasin 1916-18; [1917] .

of the way in which society functioned in the area of study. The existence is not implied, however, of any sort of monolithic polity, formally institutionalized throughout the archipelago.¹¹

TRADITIONALLY the Melanesians of New Caledonia had no term for the whole island, but used only local names.¹² Population density was low in an island where settlement was scattered, and 'villages' were generally only the cluster of huts and gardens which surrounded the ceremonial hill site of an extended family group or clan.¹³ Throughout New Caledonia traditional settlement patterns have changed more or less radically during the period of prolonged European contact, owing originally to the desire of the inhabitants to group more closely in order to facilitate their dealings with traders and/or missionaries,¹⁴ and ultimately to the desire of mission and government to concentrate the Melanesian population for ease of administration and surveillance.

11

Cf. Lenormand 1953:245-6.

12

Beaglehole 1961:544.

13

Forster 1777, II:392; Laferrrière 1845:69, 92-3, 103; Pigeard 1846:104-5; Leconte 1847:831-3; Febvrier de Pointes to Min., 21 Mar. 1854: ANOM, Carton 40, CG 1854; Thiercelin 1866, I:272; Guiart 1954b:3, 17. See also Montrouzier 1860:37.

14

Tardy de Montravel to Min., 25 Dec. 1854: ANOM, Carton 40, CG 1854; du Bouzet to Min., 14 Feb. 1855a: *ibid.*, CG 1855.

The basic unit of New Caledonian society was the clan,¹⁵ an exogamous, patrilineal and patrilocal group, whose members were theoretically descended from a common ancestor. In practice this was not necessarily so, since unrelated individuals or small groups of different origin were often attached to a group as sub-clans. In time these people acquired the status of junior clan members, 'younger brothers', dependent on and owing allegiance to the chief, regarded as the oldest man of the oldest branch of the clan. Each clan had a name, which seems not to have been spoken, and which was generally replaced by totemic or toponymic references; a totem; gods, usually ancestral spirits, or a local name for more generally recognized deities; a psychic and emotional attachment to a specific location, considered to be the original (but generally not the actual) site of residence of the clan; a territory, whose limits were known and recognized both within and without the clan. In addition, every clan had relationships with a number of other groups: such as the clans of the maternal relations of its various members; clans from which it was descended, or with which it was allied through having

15

Except where otherwise indicated, the following details on New Caledonian clans are based on Leenhardt 1930:103-5; Guiart 1954b:3-6, 12-13; 1963:14-15, 38-9. Traditionally the concept of a clan was recognized in New Caledonia, and it was variously expressed as mwaro in the language of Wailu, tun at Yengen, mwalek at Pwebo (Leenhardt 1946:445).

dispersed from a common clan of origin; dependent sub-clans, including both junior branches, and groups of exterior origin which had been assimilated to the senior lineage following defeat in war or a request for protection; descendant clans, often dispersed far from the place of origin, which retained ties of kinship and affection with the parent group. Such relationships between territorially distant clans appear to have been the basis for the development between related groups of networks of identification, which transcended linguistic boundaries, and which could sometimes be invoked in time of war. More importantly, they seem to have pointed to the existence of known itineraries along which usually small-scale migrations occurred, in a society in which casual voyaging beyond one's tribal boundaries was fairly rare, because of the dangers of enemy attack,¹⁶ but where emigration of one of the parties concerned was a common response to situations involving conflict.¹⁷

The most important political relationship between clans, however, was that which united a group of clans in common allegiance to the chief of one of their number, who thus exercised the functions of chief of a tribe. The concept of a tribe seems traditionally to have been imprecise in New

16

Rochas 1862:250; Guiart 1954b:6.

17

Guiart 1963:15, 640-2.

Caledonia, and usage of the term is further confused by the different application given it today by both administration and Melanesians.¹⁸ None of the indigenous languages appears to have a word to express the concept,¹⁹ but it is nonetheless a both valid and necessary term in any discussion of traditional polity. The various tribes formed by agglomerations of clans owing allegiance to a single chief had names and were recognized by their own members, and by outsiders as forming entities distinct from other such agglomerations, and from autonomous single clans.

The particular attributes of a tribe are difficult to delineate. Linguistic unity was not necessarily one, since more than one tribe often spoke the same language, and sometimes in large tribes individual villages spoke different languages or dialects.²⁰ On the other hand, Leenhardt²¹

18

The term tribu is used today to refer to the individual villages, presided over by so-called petits chefs, which make up the larger units, called districts, which are headed by a grand chef (Lenormand 1953:248; Guiart 1954b: 7).

19

Leenhardt:1946.

20

Lambert 1900:65. The people of Pambwa and Gomen, who belonged different tribes, spoke the same language. The people of Cambwen and Yambe, who were considered by early European visitors to belong to the Mwelebeng tribe (A.Mathieu, 'Rapport... au sujet de la formation de la tribu de Tchambouène...', 6 July 1869: Mon., 5 Sept. 1869; J.M.Villard, 'Mémoire sur la catastrophe de Pouébo en 1867': AVNC), and who say that they have 'always' been part of Mwelebeng, spoke Jawe, whilst the language of Mwelebeng itself was Caaqac (Leenhardt 1946:122; written communication of Professor K.J. Hollyman, 6 July 1970).

21

Leenhardt 1946:xiv.

claimed that the name of each language was important, because it was used to designate the speakers of the language, as well as the area in which it was spoken, and thus provided a sort of regional consciousness amongst people whose principal allegiance was to local groups. Such consciousness was often limited, however, since use of a common language did not prevent the existence of permanent hostility between tribes. Thus the Belep and the Arama spoke dialects of the same language, and yet were traditional enemies, while the Paak and the Tea Janu, who spoke different languages, were united by close ties of amity and alliance. Continuity of territory was not necessarily an attribute of a tribe. Thus the inhabitants of Wegwa, on the lower Diahot, were members of the Puma tribe of Balad, and at one period the chief of the tribe actually lived at Wegwa. Again, several clans living on the east coast near Cape Colnett recognized (and continue to recognize) as chief the Tea Janu of Webia, which is far inland, near the headwaters of the river Wayem.

In theory, and at the simplest level, tribes were formed by extension of the familial system on which clans themselves were based: a tribe was a group of clans, bound by kinship, recognizing a common ancestor, perhaps historical but more likely mythical, and paying allegiance to the man considered to be the oldest member of the oldest branch of the

original clan.²² In practice, the situation seems rarely to have been so straightforward or so formalized. The kinship principle was always present, terminologically and affectively,² but, as with clans, unrelated groups and individuals were commonly absorbed into a tribe by conquest, by immigration, by request for protection, or by invoking matrimonial links, while the nature of chieftainship was considerably more complex than is suggested by the simple formula proposed above.²⁴

The distinction between the two units, clan and tribe, was partly one of size. Some tribes, for example the Bwarat of Yengen, were large and powerful enough to embrace most of the clans of an entire region, and the name of the principal clan (that which provided the chief) was applied to the tribe as a whole.²⁵ In some other areas, such as the Wailu valley, each clan was virtually autonomous, or a number of small independent tribal groups existed, within which kinship was a much stronger principle than in larger political units elsewhere.²⁶ In the north, where neighbouring tribes generally belonged to opposing

22

Rochas 1862:240-1; Lenormand 1953:246,249.

23

Compte-rendu des Conférences ecclésiastiques du Vicariat Apostolique de la Nouvelle-Calédonie, VII, Conférence sur la loi naturelle 1905:33.

24

Rochas 1862:240-1; Guiart 1954a:23.

25

Leenhardt 1930:105.

26

Guiart 1963:ch.1.

phratries,²⁷ the larger groups tended to be separated by semi-autonomous clans or small tribes, which acted as buffers, and whose current allegiances usually reflected the political situation between the warring tribes.²⁸ The distinction between the two units went beyond considerations of size, however. Clan identification tended to be retained after emigration, which created or reinforced a link between two often quite distant areas. This was not so in the case of tribal affiliation, and the acceptance of an individual or a group into a tribe meant the replacement of old tribal allegiances by new. Memory of origins was generally retained by emigrants, however, and pre-existing ties of kinship maintained in the new situation.²⁹

The concept of a tribe in New Caledonia seems to have been a flexible and pragmatic means of social and political organization and control, based on the fundamental sociological unit of the clan, and transcending and replacing many of the functions of clans in the places where it applied. Within the group or groups of which an individual was a member his role and status were strictly defined in terms of kinship and the

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See below, pp. 34-7.

28

E.g. Jawe (Tardy de Montravel to Min., 8 July 1854; 25 Dec. 1854: ANOM, Carton 40, CG 1854); Tande (Mathieu, 'Rapport... au sujet de la formation de la tribu de Tchambouène...', 6 July 1869: Mon., 5 Sept. 1869).

29

Guiart 1963:642.

ramifications of a social model, rigid in theory, but in practice less so, in which every clan, and thus every member of a clan, had a symbolic and ceremonial function which determined relationships with other groups and individuals, and with the tribal chief, if the authority of another clan was recognized. Once it had been decided neither to kill nor to expel them, newcomers tended to be absorbed into the social model either by being accorded functions previously fulfilled by now-defunct clans, or by subdividing an existing function to make two new ones: for example, by creating two dignitaries for the mask, an owner and a keeper.³⁰ One of the most unexpected features of the absorption mechanism of local groups in New Caledonia was a tendency for the integration of newcomers to take the form of their installation as chief. The implications suggested about the nature of chieftainship and the role of migrations in New Caledonian society necessitate a closer examination of both questions.

IT is important in dealing with the question of chieftainship to emphasize first of all the differences in the scale and complexity of the roles which this term encompasses, from the chief of a small autonomous clan, to the chief of a large tribe, deferred to by the members, including the chiefs, of a number of clans other than his own.

30

Guiart 1968: Notes.

In the final analysis the status of every chief stemmed from the concept of the chief of a clan as the oldest member of the senior lineage of a group of people of common descent. Thus the clan chief was regarded as the 'elder brother' of the other members, and as the 'great son' of the clan, a genealogical entity which included both past and present generations. The term used to designate the chief of a clan meant 'great son',³¹ and was applied by extension to tribal chiefs, although in this case the implication of actual kinship was largely verbal, and even in relation to the clan it had by no means absolute relevance.

The importance of the concept of fraternity was generally not recognized by early European observers:

L'erreur des voyageurs a été de regarder le chef comme un être à part, investi d'une autorité abstraite, au lieu de considérer en lui l'ainé d'un groupe. Son autorité n'est point faite de crainte légale, mais d'une très respectueuse affection fraternelle.

32

As inheritor of the power and prestige of the past generations, as personification of the honour of the clan and the virile qualities of the masculine succession, the chief was regarded as the guarantor of the group's security. As such he was

31

Leenhardt 1946:442.

32

Ibid., 1937:149.

responsible for the success of communal enterprises, especially the harvest, and for manifesting the respect due to his own and his 'brothers'' maternal relations, especially the uterine uncles who were regarded as the source of life of the clan and of the individuals belonging to it. Thus the chief organized the great family life-crisis festivals which paid homage to the maternal relations, and which by their brilliance exalted the power and prestige of the masculine succession, culminating in the chief himself. On these and other ceremonial occasions the chief discoursed at length, listing in the appropriate order the names and genealogies, contracts and treaties, heroic feats and great victories of the groups present. Whenever he spoke in public the chief was manifesting by the quality of his discourse the honour and prestige of the clan, and where his authority was recognized by other clans, the tribe:³³

La fonction du chef est d'être l'homme de la parole et de prononcer en chaque occasion les mots adéquats, rituels, et le discours qui met l'acte en évidence et lui donne son sens.

34

Among the most important acts requiring the spoken word of the chief to give them meaning and immediacy was the circulation created by the reciprocal offering of gifts, a process which accompanied and symbolized most of the formal inter-personal

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Leenhardt 1930:77-9, 83, 89-90; 1937:150, 152; Guiart 1954b:9; 1963:38-40.

34

Leenhardt 1941:366.

and inter-group relationships in New Caledonian society. This exchange was exemplified by the bringing of the first yams to the chief by his 'younger brothers' in a gesture of confidence in him as representative of the clan, its land and its undertakings, and his offering in return the equivalent of what he had received; by the exchange of precious objects between clans on ceremonial occasions; by the exchange of gifts between host and visitor, whether they be individuals or entire groups visiting another for ceremonial purposes.³⁵

The inability of a chief's son to memorize and pronounce adequately the discourse appropriate for every occasion generally led to his replacement as heir to the chieftainship by a younger brother³⁶ or an uncle whose talents were more apt, since the authority of a chief within a group was a function more of the quality of his discourse than of the force at his disposal. Thus the strict application of the principle of primogeniture was modified by the reservation that the chief must be a worthy representative of the honour and prestige of

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E.g. Rochas 1862:250-1; Vieillard et Deplanche 1863:33, 64, 66 Patouillet 1872:180-6, 223; Lambert 1900:91-2, 106, 110, 116, 117-20, 234-5; Sarasin [1917] :77-8; Baudoux 1938:28.

36

Leenhardt 1930:63: 'L'appellation "frères" s'étend aux enfants du père, des frères du père, des frères de la mère, et plus loin encore, aux petits-neveux et fils des grands-pères et frères des grands-pères et des grand'mères paternels et utérins'; Lambert 1900:114-5.

the group, a matter on which the council of elders seems to have been the sole judge.³⁷

It should be noted, however, that while in such cases the deposed heir lost the substance of his position, he lost none of the trappings. He retained the privileges and the marks of respect due to his rank, and in general the chieftainship eventually reverted to his descendants, should they be considered fit to exercise it.³⁸ Sometimes, however, a chief with no suitable heir would adopt a young man, who became in every respect his legitimate successor, the bearer of the name and tradition of his clan, and the prerogatives and obligations of his position.³⁹ Should a chief be considered too young to rule, a near relation acted as his 'regent'. The 'regent' usually retained great authority until his death, when the chief or his descendant resumed full control of the affairs of the group.⁴⁰

37

Montrouzier 1860: 48; Rochas 1862:234; Leenhardt 1937:150; Guiart 1963:39; c.f. Montrouzier to his brother, 14 Oct. 1853: APM/Personal file (Montrouzier).

38

Personal communication of Maurice Moueaou, Pouébo, August 1969.

39

Rochas 1862:234; Glaumont 1889:82; Vincent 1895:23.

40

Montrouzier 1860: 48; Vincent 1895:23; Turpin de Morel 1956-7:144, see below, pp. 201, 203.

The marks of deference shown to a chief by his 'brothers' were numerous, and were responsible for European misconceptions as to his position. No one passed behind his back, or stood higher than he; women crouched on all fours when in his vicinity; turtles and certain fish were offered to him; it was forbidden to touch any of his possessions or his person; he was often deified after death. Such deference was, however, shown to all elder brothers and maternal uncles by their younger brothers and nephews. It was intensified into ritual according to the prestige of a chief, and was performed by all who recognized him as the 'great son' of a particular group.⁴¹ The death of an important chief was traditionally followed by the devastation of his coconut trees, dwellings and gardens, while his 'brothers' destroyed their most precious possessions and mutilated their faces and bodies in order to demonstrate the intensity of their sorrow.⁴² Normal activities tended to cease during the initial mourning period.⁴³ Such actions were an extension of the normal pattern of behaviour of a family following the death of one of its number; the duration of the mourning period, the numbers

⁴¹

Rochas 1862:237, 258; Lambert 1900: 112-14; Leenhardt 1930: 97-8; 1937:149.

⁴²

Leconte 1847:843-4; Rochas 1862:267-70; Vieillard et Deplanche 1863:63-5; Thiercelin 1866, I:313; Patouillet 1872:102, 184-5; Lambert 1900:235.

⁴³

Rochas 1862:267; [Gagnière] 1905:21, 28.

participating, and the extravagance of the accompanying ceremonies all increased in proportion to the status of the deceased.⁴⁴ The death of a great chief was sometimes commemorated often years later by a special ceremony which usually involved the ravaging of the lands of the host tribe (that to which the chief had belonged) by the visitors, led by the clan of the dead chief's maternal relations.⁴⁵ The nature of this ceremony meant that it often ended in war, while the exigency of providing sustenance for such a large and prolonged gathering normally involved the host group in hardship and often famine. Should the death of the chief have actually occurred in war, social shame and desire for vengeance would be unbounded and the resulting conflicts both bitter and perpetuated.⁴⁶

The chief generally shared his authority in matters of common interest with a council consisting of the elders of the group and any who by their particular talents earned a place, such as the war chief, prestigious priests and sorcerers,

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Leconte 1847:843-4; Rochas 1862:267-70; Vieillard et Deplanche 1863:64-5; Glaumont 1889:123, 130; Lambert 1900:235; Sarasin [1917]:49.

45

Rochas 1862:268-9; Lambert 1900:245-9; [Gagnière] 1905: 28-33; Leenhardt 1930:81, 85.

46

Patouillet 1872:165.

sculptors and so forth.⁴⁷ Theoretically such a council wielded only as much power as the chief was prepared to allow it, and it appears to have acted principally in an advisory capacity.⁴⁸ After the appropriate priest had consulted the particular spirits or totem with which he was in communion, it was the chief who made pronouncements regulating communal enterprises, and it was he who, as representative of the prestige of the group, was held responsible for their success. On the other hand, one way in which a chief showed his loyalty to custom was in his choice of advisors, and in the heed which he paid to their opinions.⁴⁹ Thus the council, the members of which were themselves prestigious personages, was potentially and very often actually a body exercising real authority.⁵⁰

After consultation with the council, then, and generally after reaching some sort of consensus, the chief gave

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Leconte 1847:826; Rochas 1862:164; Patouillet 1872: 131; Durand 1900:503; Lambert 1900:80; Leenhardt 1937:150, Guiart 1954b:9-10; 1963:39.

48

De la Hautière 1869:76-8; C[olomb] 1890:9; Vincent 1895:20-1. After about 1860 the council of elders declined in importance, as a concomitant of missionary and official policies which tended to enhance chiefly authority and thereby create auxiliaries who serve as intermediaries in the conversion or the administration of the tribes (see below, pp.). In the new conditions pertaining since World War II, however, the council has gradually acquired renewed influence in the regulation of tribal affairs (Guiart 1954b:28).

49

Leenhardt 1937:150; Guiart 1963:39.

50

Goujon, 'Journal de l'île des Pins', 21 Oct. 1849, 31 Aug. 1850, 23 Mar. 1851; Rochas 1862:244, Glaumont 1889:75.

the signal for the commencement of cultivation of the gardens, for the harvest, for great fishing expeditions; he punished malefactors and mediated in serious disputes between members of the group; he declared war and made peace, although he did not himself take part in hostilities;⁵¹ he spared the defeated enemy, arranged inter-clan gatherings, and generally regulated the affairs of the community.⁵² As far as land was concerned,⁵³ the chief fulfilled a dual role, which paralleled the dichotomy inherent in the traditional system of property rights. The chief as an individual possessed only those tracts which he had inherited, or which he cleared and cultivated, and was not necessarily the largest landholder in the group. Indeed, some tribal chiefs had few or no personal land rights and were dependent on their 'subjects' for survival. As 'great son' of a clan, however, a chief 'owned' and administered the clan land, the patrimony of the past generations whose representative he was. It is thus necessary to distinguish between proprietary and usufructuary right to land: the former was vested in the clan, and was in practice rarely alienated because of the sacred nature of the clan's territory; the latter was vested in the individual who cultivated the land, and could be ceded to outsiders with the chief's approval, in return for regular

51

Vigors 1850:251; Rochas 1862:207.

52

Lambert 1900:80; Leenhardt 1937:150-1; Guiart 1954b:9; 1963:39-40.

53

Except where otherwise indicated the following section on land tenure is based on Saussol 1971:227-47. See also Rochas 1862:244 261; Vincent 1895:26-7; Lambert 1900:82-9; Leenhardt 1930:91, 94-96; 1937:151.

gifts, usually yams. Such transfer of proprietary rights as did occur was usually connected with the absorption of strangers into the clan or tribe, and carried with it the obligation of acknowledgement by periodic gifts. Sometimes a group threatened with extinction designated a chief as inheritor of its possessions, which he then assigned to new owners, who by taking the name of the defunct group ensured that it should not die with them.⁵⁴ Similarly, a group seeking protection from an enemy might offer its land to a chief, but in both cases the latter acquired the right not to possess but to administer the land in question, and an increase rather in his prestige and power than in his material wealth.⁵⁵ Crops, and also fishing, hunting and gathering rights, rights to trees, streams and so forth did not necessarily have the same owner as the land on which they were sited. Unoccupied land was communal property. European ignorance of the intricacies of this dual system, as of the profound psychic importance which Melanesians attached to the specific soil, trees, streams which formed the inheritance of their clan,⁵⁶ was to lead to inter-racial hatred, and to some of the most bitter clashes of the colonial period.

54

Guiart 1963:39; 1968: Notes.

55

Leenhardt 1930:91; 1937:151.

56

Lambert 1900:86-9, 359; Métais 1953a:114-5; Guiart 1963:15.

Agricultural activities were performed by communal effort, in which the chief shared. In deference to the 'great son', his gardens were the first to be worked, but his prerogatives do not appear to have extended beyond this.⁵⁷ The culmination of a season's work in the gardens was achieved with the yam harvest, which was everywhere an occasion of great symbolic and ceremonial importance. The classic manifestation of allegiance by an individual or a group to a particular chief was the offering to him of the first yams gathered from each garden, in a ceremony which symbolized the reciprocity of the relationship between a chief and his 'brothers'. It was customary, at least in some areas, for the chief to offer in return the equivalent of what he had received.⁵⁸ The ramifications of the distribution of the first yams in a particular area appear to be a fairly reliable indicator of certain relationships between groups, and of the complex network of allegiances which often existed. These sometimes reflected situations in which the chieftainship was held by a clan of relatively recent origin, whilst the previous holders of the office retained for themselves functions which assured them of a very real, if sometimes less obvious, authority.⁵⁹

57

Lambert 1900:220-1; Leenhardt 1930:93, 117; 1937:150; Guiart 1963:656; cf. Thiercelin 1866, I:303.

58

Leenhardt 1930:93-4, 127-30; Guiart 1954b:8-9.

59

See below, pp.27-9; Guiart 1963:28-37, 41, 132-43, 641; see also Patouillet 1872:130-1; Sarasin [1917]:73, 77-8; Turpin de Morel 1956-7:146.

Within certain limits the authority of a chief over his 'brothers' in his own clan and in attached sub-clans was very great.⁶⁰ While he continued to act for the common good and in keeping with his role of 'elder brother', representative of the honour of the clan and the prestige of the past generations; while he avoided violations which could disturb the delicate balance thought to exist between men and the spirit world, a balance on which the success of the harvest, and therefore the survival of the group, depended; while he ensured that the proper respect was shown and customary obligations met towards the maternal relations, considered to be the source of life of the group and its members; while he continued not to abuse the rights of his 'brothers', he was often blindly obeyed and had over them command of life and death.⁶¹ Should he fail in his responsibility to ensure the success of the group's undertakings; should he repeatedly abuse the particular rights of his 'brothers'; should he refuse all control of his actions; should it be felt that he was betraying the honour and destroying the security of the clan, he might be replaced in the chieftainship by a relative or by a representative of a different lineage, and be forced into exile; or individuals or even his entire clan might abandon him and seek protection

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Leenhardt 1930:98; 1935:215; Guiart 1963:640.

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Leconte 1847:851; Rochas 1862:246; Garnier 1901:231; Leenhardt 1937:151; Guiart 1963:40.

elsewhere under another chief.⁶² A tribal chief might similarly be replaced or abandoned should he fail adequately to fulfil his role or repeatedly abuse his position.

The tendency for conflict within social groups to be solved by the exile of one or other of the parties involved seems to have been fairly widespread, since the greatest potentiality for collision was between siblings. This was a natural concomitant of the abasement of the younger before the elder, towards whom open resistance appears to have been regarded as sacrilegious.⁶³ The alternatives were his peaceful removal and generally his exile, or the self-exile of the discontented 'brother(s)'. Such displacement of personnel rarely involved large numbers, whose absorption into a new environment would probably have led to clashes over land. Large-scale migrations seem, in fact, sometimes to have involved violent conflict and overthrow of the previous holders of the land, although conquest by force appears to have been an unusual way for people to establish themselves in a new area.⁶⁴ The frequency of migrations⁶⁵ necessitated the elaboration of means to deal with the problem of new arrivals. They could have been refused admittance and expelled;

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Rochas 1862:225, 246-7; Leenhardt 1937:152; Guiart 1954b:8-9; 1963:641.

63

Leenhardt 1937:152; Guiart 1963:640-1.

64

Rochas 1862:243; Guiart 1963:641, 649-52.

65

Guiart 1953; 1954a:24-6; 1963: passim.

they could have been killed; they could have been reduced to the role of slaves, all of which presuppose violence or at least severe tensions between the established population and newcomers. Or, as usually happened, they could be admitted into the existing social structure on a more or less equal basis, and assigned a particular role with corresponding prerogatives and obligations. Defeated enemies whose lives had been spared were sometimes introduced in a like manner into the social group to which the victor belonged.⁶⁶ The previous inhabitants retained almost intact their privileges, and usually continued to exercise authority in the group, although this was often obscured by the particular means used to introduce the newcomer. A noticeable feature of the method of dealing with immigrants was 'la fréquence des cas, ou l'acceptation d'un nouveau venu... [prit] la forme de son intronisation à la chefferie.' Guiart explained this in terms of the relative independence of the system of land tenure from the structure of authority:

... on peut concevoir qu'un étranger puisse apparaître moins gênant au sommet de la pyramide, ou il contrôle peu de choses, et dépend de tout le monde, qu'à la base où il conviendrait de lui accorder des terres en suffisance.

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 66

Rochas 1862:234, 252; Durand 1900:514; Lambert 1900:177.

67

Guiart 1963:641.

In some areas, therefore, the power of the political chieftainships was limited by the existence of dignitaries, who, as chiefs of clans which previously occupied the land, claimed and exercised the rights of earliest inhabitants, and bore the title of master of the soil:

Celui qui...sacrifie a l'ancêtre, distribue la jouissance des parcelles du sol, est l'arbitre dans les contestations; prêtre, cadastre vivant et maître du sol qu' il détient, comme lui étant confié par ceux qui l'ont précédé, ou, s'il l'a mis en valeur lui-même, lui étant laissé en jouissance par le totem maître de l'endroit.

68

The master of the soil, who was not obliged to offer the first yams of his own garden to the chief, was a person of great authority because of his presumed ability to communicate with the spirits of the land which he administered. He tended to remain in the background and allow the chief the appearance of power, but few chiefs dared to defy him, while even a conqueror usually left the master unharmed, to ensure the propitiation of the spirits of the conquered territory.⁶⁹ Chiefs who combined political authority in particular areas with the function of master of the soil could exercise great power, but such amalgamation of roles was comparatively rare, given the complexity of traditional New Caledonian political organization, the frequency of migrations and the methods often

68

Leenhardt 1935:140.

69

Guiart 1963:35.

used to introduce newcomers. Certainly none of the great tribal chieftainships appears to be able to trace its lineage beyond eight generations, and the dynastic principle seems never to have taken hold.⁷⁰ The authority of the master of the soil continues today to be considerable, since he alone controls and can consent to a sale of the land of which he is master,⁷¹ although legally the land in the reserves is communally owned. The role of masters of the soil, or those who claimed to be the original inhabitants of the land, is of crucial importance in many reserves, where the official policy of cantonnement⁷² compelled large numbers of people to settle on lands to which they had no traditional rights. Such people became dependent on the masters for usufructuary rights, a situation aggravated by the pressure of overcrowding, and by the necessity for long-term alienation of such rights once cash-cropping began on any scale.⁷³

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Guiart 1954a:22-3; 1963:643-5.

71

Leenhardt 1935:140; Guiart 1954b:17.

72

The policy of cantonnement was formally instituted in January 1868 in order to rationalize Melanesian land holdings, so that a clearly delimited reserve might be allotted to each tribe in proportion to its population. All other land could then be made available for colonization. During the 1870's and again in the 1890's the demands of, in the first case, penal and in the second case free colonization caused the administration to abandon earlier provisions which had guaranteed the inviolability of the reserved lands, and the physical link between reserves and traditional holdings. Thus cantonnement became a policy which confined Melanesians to reserves which bore no necessary relation to their traditional territory or to their customary tribal affiliations, and which were usually insufficient for their needs.

73

Bélouma 1958-9:21-2; Saussol 1971:235-6.

The influence of those people, such as masters of the soil, who were thought to be in rapport with powerful spirits, gods or totems was great,⁷⁴ although in some respects it was not always obvious. The functions, attributes and prestige of such people varied according to the quality of the beings which they invoked,⁷⁵ but all enjoyed some degree of respect, and were feared because of their dealings with the unknown. Every aspect of nature and of human life and endeavour was believed to be subject to the influence, whether beneficent or malevolent, of supernatural forces, many of which were the spirits of dead chiefs and ancestors. The human beings with whom they were allegedly in communion were thought to be able to call on this influence to control the elements, and thus the harvest; to cause ill-health or death, or cure disease; to determine the results of man's enterprises. Some fulfilled the role of priests, by undertaking the propitiation of the relevant spirits or totems before any individual or group enterprise, and by paying homage to the ancestral spirits of a group, especially on ceremonial occasions; others practised divination, and attempted to predict the results of future actions, or reveal the authors of a crime; others again used sorcery or sympathetic magic in order to reveal and punish wrong-doers, to achieve personal ambitions, to cure an illness, or as an

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Vincent 1895:25-6; Durand 1900:510-12.

75

Rochas 1862:288.

instrument of policy.⁷⁶ The role of such people in the indigenous society was thus concerned primarily with attempting to control the environment and with the exercise of justice in the group.⁷⁷ They utilized a variety of methods and materials, but all made use of a stone, believed to be the concrete representation of the particular spirit, god or totem with which they were in contact.⁷⁸

Since every action of man was believed to be subject to the operation of forces which were beyond his control, but which could be invoked through the mediation of certain peculiarly-endowed people, every individual or public misfortune was attributed to the actions of sorcerers who were, perhaps unconsciously, in communion with maleficent spirits:

Un homme réputé sorcier, et jugé capable de faire des maléfices au préjudice de la vie d'autrui, n'est pas seulement mal vu, mais son existence est considérée comme un fléau. Rarement il meurt de mort naturelle.

79

Thus a concerted witch-hunt was the usual concomitant of public calamity such as epidemic, famine or the death of a chief from illness, but the victims of such a process tended to

76

Montrouzier to his brother, 14 Oct. 1853: APM/Personal file (Montrouzier); Montrouzier 1860:29-36 ; Rochas 1862:275-81, 287-96; Vieillard et Deplanche 1863:25-30; Lambert 1900:1-251 passim; Leenhardt 1930:39-42, 114-34 passim, 143-234 passim, 235-60.

77

Leenhardt 1930:237.

78

Ibid., 241-5.

79

Lambert 1900:75.

be nonentities, often people accused of being possessed, and of acting in spite of themselves.⁸⁰ There is also some evidence to suggest that such occasions were at times used, especially by chiefs, as a pretext to destroy a rival or an enemy.⁸¹ An individual who suspected that he was the victim of the malevolent actions of another generally tried to use more powerful magic to thwart the influence of the inimical spirits.

Within a clan the chief was generally not responsible for paying homage to the ancestors nor for communicating with the supernatural forces which determined the success of the group's enterprises, although he personally sacrificed in honour of his own forebears. The former function was left to a representative of a junior lineage.⁸² Specific supernatural talents, such as the pretended ability to commune with a particular totem or spirit, or knowledge of a special method were often exercised by a particular clan, and were passed down from father to son.⁸³ The people whose role it was to prepare for the various enterprises of a group by predicting the outcome and by propitiating the appropriate supernatural

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Leconte 1847:844-6; Rougeyron to Supérieur-général, 14 Feb. 1847: APM/ONC, 26a; Goujon, 'Journal de l'île des Pins', 10 June 1852; Rochas 1862:287-9; cf. Leenhardt 1930:244-5.

81

Besson 1847:405; Montrouzier 1860:31.

82

Leenhardt 1930: 94-7.

83

Rochas 1862:296.

beings tended, like the master of the soil, to remain in the background. They enjoyed considerable influence, however, since in practice it was they who made the decisions when to act, leaving the chief to proclaim them to the group. The difference between such dignitaries, including the master of the soil, and the chief, was thus one of function: the chief's principal role was to speak, but he would not act without the impetus and the support of the others, whose authority, primarily religious, was also of potential political importance.⁸⁴ This division of function did not exist everywhere to the same degree, and a chief such as Waulo of Belep, who had the reputation of being a powerful sorcerer and evocator,⁸⁵ enjoyed a possibility for independent action far beyond that of chiefs in some other areas, recent arrivals generally, whose subordination to the priests was marked. In practice such division of functions provided a safeguard against chiefly absolutism, and lent to New Caledonian political and social organization a complexity and flexibility which was not often apparent to European observers.

No chief, however powerful, seems to have possessed widespread authority over clans other than his own, and

84

Leenhardt 1930:107-9, 116-7; Guiart 1963:40-1.

85

Rochas 1862:296; Vieillard et Deplanche 1863:27; Lambert 1900:10; see also Leenhardt 1930:98.

associated sub-clans. Again, confusion over this point was a fertile source of misunderstanding and exaggeration by Europeans. In large tribes relations between the tribal chief and the chiefs of the various clans which paid allegiance to him were a matter of compromise and negotiation. Every member of a tribe contributed in matters which concerned the common good or augmented the glory of the tribe, but they did so of their own volition, and their rights had to be respected.⁸⁶ The prestige of the chief of a large tribe, such as Bwarat of Yengen, might be immense, but traditionally he was no autocrat, and the extent of his authority depended more on his intelligence and his ability to realize the potential of his position whilst respecting its traditional limitations, than on the position per se.

FROM the customary political and social viewpoint the area under consideration in this study can in one sense be considered an entity because of the existence north of a line between Yengen and Temala of a traditional division between two opposing networks of identification known as Oot and

86

Forget to Min., 15 June 1860: Collection Margry; Rochas 1862:244-6; Patouillet 1872:134-5; Guiart 1954b:9; 1968: Notes.

Waap.⁸⁷ There is a paucity of exact information on the significance of these networks, while little is known about the organization and working of the system.⁸⁸ The two phratries seem to have been unstructured confederations, which furnished a means of identification between groups with certain common interests and problems, common enemies and often a common origin. Guiart considered that the traditional opposition of Oot and Waap functioned to provide a raison d'être for the various high chieftainships of the region, because of the existence of hereditary adversaries and customary enemies.

Present-day informants tend to reply to questions about Oot and Waap by giving a list of clans and tribes belonging to either or both groups. An informant at Tiari spoke of the existence of two great opposing 'families', the members of each of which went to the aid of their kinsmen in time of need.⁸⁹ Kinship links seem certainly to have existed within

87

Waap is known as Wafaf at Yengen (Guiart 1957:24) and as Watambwen at Kumak and Balad (Guiart 1955:43; personal communication of Thomas Ngai, Tiari, August 1969). The particular allegiances of the various tribes in the area studied were as follows:

Oot: Belep, Nenema, Bonde (Paak), Pwebo (Mwelebeng), Cambwen, Yambe, Webia (Tea Janu), Colnett, Wayem, certain clans at Kumak and Gomen, Gavac, Tando, Tipinje:

Waap: Arama, most of Kumak and Gomen, Cari, Balad (Puma), Pambwa (Maluma), Jawe, Tao, Panye, Yengen (Bwarat), Kulna (Guiart 1957:22).

88

The main details of the following section are based on Guiart 1957:21-7.

89

Personal communication of Thomas Ngai, Tiari, August 1969.

the two phratries. The chiefly clans of many Oot tribes claimed a common ancestor, called Tijit or Tinjin, while the chiefs of Yengen, Kumak, Balad and Arama, all Waap, were related.

Almost without exception the northern clans and tribes of New Caledonia claim allegiance to one or other phratry.⁹⁰ Their geographical localization appears to have been exact and permanent, and to have transcended the division common in Melanesia between coastal and mountain people. For instance, the Paak of Bonde and the Mwelebeng of Pwebo were both Oot, and were close traditional allies; yet the Paak lived inland in the hilly middle valley of the river Diahot, while the Mwelebeng lived on the coast; similarly, the Puma of Balad and the Arama, allied coast-dwellers, were enemies of the Mwelebeng and allies of the Maluma of Pambwa, who lived in the upper Diahot valley. War, or at least constant enmity, was the usual state of affairs between the two groups. They provided a setting in which traditional and permanent alliances and enmities operated,⁹¹ although hostility could also exist within as well as between the two phratries. The wars seem not to have involved conquest of territory, and the absorption of an individual or a small group into a tribe belong to the opposing phratry usually led to a change of allegiance.

90

Leenhardt 1930:105.

91

Lambert 1900:173-4.

The periodic renewal of wars between Oot and Waap appears especially to have taken place at the time of the death of an important chief, in whose honour raids were organized on enemy territory. Counterbalancing the hostility between Oot and Waap, traditional and permanent matrimonial links existed, and to some extent continue, between the two groups, although they were not entirely exogamous: 'il s'agirait plutôt d'une forme de mariage préférentiel, plus particulièrement dans les chefferies'.⁹² The division was represented symbolically in the great inter-tribal ceremonies, especially the life-crisis festivals at which the maternal relations were honoured guests. Relationships between the two groups seem generally to have been conducted by intermediaries, and particular clans fulfilled this role in specific areas.⁹³ Permanent patterns of reciprocal hospitality seem to have existed within each phratry, an aspect of increasing importance today with the disappearance of the dangers which traditionally inhibited casual voyaging, and with the more recent lifting of restrictions on indigenous travel.⁹⁴

92

Guiart 1957:24.

93

Guiart 1968: Notes; personal communication of Thomas Ngai, Tiari, August 1969.

94

Guiart 1954b:6.

This discussion is not intended to imply that the region where the Oot-Waap dichotomy existed formed in any sense an autonomous or coherent unit, artificially isolated from the rest of New Caledonia. The division was, however, an important element in the traditional social and political set-up in this region, and therefore a factor of potential relevance in the contact situation.

CHAPTER II

BALAD

THE Balad district became the scene of much of the earliest European activity in New Caledonia because of an historical accident. Cook, while sailing westward from the southern New Hebrides in search of land whose presence Bougainville had suspected, happened to make a landfall there in 1774. D'Entrecasteaux led his expedition in search of La Pérouse to Balad in 1793, and later French expeditions until annexation in 1853 went there as a matter of course, because the area was known, and after 1843 was, except for a period of four years, the main base of the French Marist missionaries in New Caledonia.

All this activity occurred despite the lack of a sure anchorage and in one of the least fertile parts of the north-east coast. Furthermore, the Puma tribe of Balad was traditionally weaker and less numerous than its neighbours.¹ After annexation and the development of the main settlement of the new colony in the south-west, at Port-de-France (Nouméa after 1866), Balad became a backwater, deserted by many of its people. It retained some importance until 1870, however, because of its proximity to the scene of several of the more

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D'Entrecasteaux 1808, I:353; Laferrrière 1845:103; Leconte 1847:822, 835-6; du Bouzet to Min., 14 Feb. 1855b: ANOM, Carton 40, CG 1855; Beaglehole 1961:543.

notable conflicts of the early colonial period, and because of the role which the few people who remained there played in these conflicts.

FROM the evidence available it seems almost certain that no European remained at Balad for more than a brief period before 1843. The longest recorded visit was that of D'Entrecasteaux, who was at anchorage off Maamat for nineteen days. Cook's Resolution stayed only eight days. Despite the brevity of their visits, and the linguistic barrier which limited verbal communication, the reports² of these expeditions are invaluable because they are the earliest known descriptions of New Caledonian society,³ and they provide a starting point for a reconstruction of the political relationships between clans in the Balad area during the early years of European contact. These relationships were ultimately to influence profoundly the pattern and effects of acculturation at Balad until well into the colonial period.

Although the members of Cook's expedition met several people whom they referred to as chiefs, they were unanimous about the identity of the paramount chief of the district opposite their anchorage at Maamat.⁴ Cook concluded:

²

Forster 1777, II:377-431; Labillardière 1800, II:181-248; D'Entrecasteaux 1808, I:329-62; Sparrman 1953:155-75; Beaglehole 1961:527-46, 763-4 (Clerke's Log), 863-8 (Wales's Journal); [Marra] 1967:289-94.

³

Douglas 1970:180-90 analyses the records of the two voyages and the visitors' impact on the people of Balad.

⁴

Forster 1777, II:380; Sparrman 1953:158; Beaglehole 1961:544.

... that the Country is divided into several districts, each governed by a Cheif, but we know nothing of the extent of his power. Balade was the Name of the district we were at and Tiā Booma the Chief, he lived on the other side the ridge of hills, so that we had but little of his Company and therefore could see but little of his power. 5

Cook's information tallies with local tradition,⁶ which suggests that the high chiefs of Balad belonged to the Tea Puma (or Tea Bweon) cīan, which had resided for a long time across the mountains, on the river Diahot, near the present town of Ouégoa. It was Tea Puma who presided at the ritual exchange of gifts with Cook, regarded as the clan chief of the strangers.

References to chiefs are much less explicit in the accounts of d'Entrecasteaux's sojourn in the Balad area, in part because the French, unlike Cook's people, were always on bad terms with the inhabitants and had fewer dealings with them. On one occasion, however, two chiefs called theabooma mediated in a dispute between four Frenchmen and a large crowd of Melanesians. They then asked to be taken to the ships, where they exchanged gifts with d'Entrecasteaux.⁷ The previous neglect

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Beaglehole 1961:544.

6

Oral evidence provides two more or less similar versions of the political relationships and migrations of clans in the Balad area before about 1850. The more detailed version was received by Professor Guiart, was outlined in Guiart 1963:649, and elaborated in conversation with the author in 1968 (Guiart 1968: Notes). The second was received by the author from Thomas Ngai of Tiari in August 1969. The two versions are summarized and tested against historical evidence in Douglas 1970:185-97.

7

Labillardière 1800, II:200-1.

by the French of this ritual between host and visitor may well help explain the hostility of the Balad people towards the strangers. Labillardière, one of the naturalists of the expedition, gave the term theabooma as a translation of 'chief'.⁸ This suggests that the Tea Puma clan was still influential in 1793. It is also valid to assume that the Tea Puma still lived some distance from Balad, since only one meeting with the theabooma was reported, on the second day of the French stay, when great crowds of people had gathered at the landing-place.

Limited though these indications are, they nevertheless, in conjunction with oral testimony, provide sufficient evidence to justify the conclusion that the leading clan in the Balad region in about 1800 was the Wegwa-based Tea Puma. More detailed information on the clans actually resident at Balad is available only for the period after December 1843.

IN December 1843 the French corvette Bucéphale anchored at Maamat bearing five Marist missionaries, who had decided to make their base at Balad because, despite its obscurity, it was the best known part of the New Caledonian group. The warship remained for a month. Its stay produced two naval reports,⁹ which contain details useful for a reconstruction of the political situation at Balad at the onset of regular contact with

8

Ibid, Vocabulaire:59.

9

Lafferrière 1845; Pigeard 1846.

Europeans, and at a time when the traditional political and social structure, despite the brief visits of the previous century, was virtually intact.

On this occasion communication between Melanesians and Europeans was facilitated by the presence at Balad of several Polynesian speakers, with whom the missionary Viard was able to converse in the language of Wallis.¹⁰ The person introduced to the French as chief of Balad, and under whose protection the mission was initially set up at Maamat, was named Payama. Local tradition suggests that Payama was the son of a man who had been adopted 'before the arrival of the missionaries' to be the representative of the Tea Puma at Balad. The latter clan is said to have moved at some stage from Wegwa to Balad, where it became known as Tea Bweon, but the oral evidence is unclear as to when the move actually occurred. French naval reports, however, throw some light on this question. According to the naval observers the high chief of the Balad region in 1843 was Pakili-Puma, who lived on the Diahot river at 'Koko',¹¹ a name which today evokes no

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These people were the descendants of successive small-scale migrations of Polynesian-speaking peoples to Uvea (Loyalty Islands). Linguistic evidence suggests that they had made contact with the eastern littoral of New Caledonia by 1774 (Haudricourt and Hollyman 1960:219-26). By 1843, according to the commander of the Bucéphale, they had 'envahi presque tout le littoral' of north-eastern New Caledonia, while several enjoyed the confidence of local chiefs (Laferrrière 1845:108). The political role of these people at Balad is discussed in Douglas 1970: passim.

11

Laferrrière 1845:66; Leconte 1847b:844.

response, but which seems to have been near Ouégoa. On his death in 1844 Pakili-Puma was succeeded by his son Bweon, who was resident at Bayup when he encouraged the missionaries to move there from Maamat in 1845.¹² It is possible that Bweon did not move to Bayup from Wegwa until after his father's¹³ death, since his name was mission from the declaration of recognition of French sovereignty signed by Pakili-Puma and his two brothers, by Payama and his brothers Gwa Puma, Cangun and Undo, and by chiefs from nearby tribes who visited the Bucéphale during its stay.¹⁴ Among the signatories were all the Balad chiefs who were later to become famous, or infamous, under the colonial régime, with the exception of Bweon; neither does he appear in the reports of Laferrière or Pigeard. Later his village at Bayup was to become the largest and most important in the region,¹⁵ and it is likely that he would have participated in the settlement of the missionaries at Maamat had he been at Bayup in 1843, unless perhaps he was too young. It thus appears likely that the move of the Tea Puma from Wegwa

12

Leconte 1847b:820, 844.

13

The implications of the term 'father' should be noted: 'Le vrai père n'est pas distingué de toute la génération de ses frères. Le père petit peut être aussi bien le vrai père' (Leenhardt 1935:230); see also Leenhardt 1930:61; Lambert 1900: 114-5. Montrouzier claimed that Bweon was 'illegitimate' by birth and was for this reason not respected (Montrouzier to his brother, 14 Oct. 1853: APM/Personal file [Montrouzier]).

14

Person 1954:211.

15

Tardy de Montravel to Min., 25 Dec. 1854: ANOM, Carton 40, CG 1854.

to Balad may not have occurred until after the arrival of the missionaries. Furthermore, it was probably motivated by the desire of Bweon, the clan chief, to be closer to the supply of European goods which the mission provided, and to gain prestige from the installation of Europeans under his direct patronage, rather than with a chief of lesser status than himself.

In 1843 Payama's authority in the context of the Puma tribe as a whole was limited.¹⁶ He was actually chief of the village of Maamat. Later, however, the second most influential chief at Balad was Payama's brother, Cangun,¹⁷ while Undo and Gwa, subsequently to be high chiefs of the Puma tribe after the deposition of Bweon by the French, also seem to have been brothers of Payama.¹⁸ After about 1849 the internal politics of the Puma tribe were characterized by a struggle for supremacy between Payama's clan and the Tea Bweon.¹⁹ This rivalry may well have predated the arrival of the missionaries, but it was possibly limited by the physical separation of the clans. Overt antagonism probably originated in 1845 with Bweon's displacement of Payama as the patron and protector of the missionaries. The conflict was finally resolved at the end of

16

Lafferrière 1845:106; Leconte 1847b:820.

17

Tardy de Montravel to Min., 25 Dec. 1854: ANOM, Carton 40, CG 1854.

18

Garnier 1867:199; Person 1954:211.

19

Especially after 1851; see below, pp. 61-80, passim.

1856, with the deposition of Bweon by the French and his replacement by a representative of the rival clan. Thus until 1857 intensive culture contact and acculturation operated at Balad in a context of internal tribal dissension, which was itself in part a response to the presence of Europeans.

WITHIN this context the history of culture contact at Balad after 1843 is a record of qualified acceptance by the inhabitants of at first missionary and later official influence, punctuated by periods of violent opposition. The process culminated in the division of the tribe into supporters and opponents of the mission, a division which reflected existing clan rivalries. After the physical separation of the two factions by the removal of the Christians to Conception, near Port-de-France, the relatively few people who remained at Balad in the 1860's were largely reconciled to the presence of Europeans when they became the allies of the colonial government in a campaign against the mission and the Christians of nearby tribes, in particular the Mwelebeng of Pwebo.

Between 1843 and 1853 the Marist missionaries were the main agents of European contact at Balad. The process of culture contact during this decade occurred in three distinct periods, delimited by the dates August 1847 (expulsion of the missionaries from Balad) and May 1851 (their return). In only the third of these periods can the intra-tribal conflict outlined above be clearly delineated. The evidence extant for

the two earlier periods is simply not sufficiently detailed to enable the actions and responses of separate clans and individuals to be differentiated.²⁰ That this is so should not, however, be taken to imply that the Puma tribe operated at this time as a coordinated unit, which would belie both the traditionally loose organization of New Caledonian tribes, and the probable internal fragmentation of the Puma tribe in particular.

In the early stages, contact between the missionaries and the Puma was facilitated by the presence of the Polynesian-speaking interpreters. This gave the Marists an advantage in comparison with the first missionaries in many other parts of Melanesia, where the multiplicity of languages often inhibited progress for years. The mediation of the Uveans enabled the Marists to explain their aims and their requirements and permitted the commander of the Bucéphale to encourage good behaviour with the promise that another warship would soon visit Balad, to reward the friends of the mission and punish its enemies.²¹ The expectation that association with the strangers

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Missionary letters and reports before 1847 concentrated on the hardships and trials which the missionaries had to endure, and are of little use for a reconstruction of Melanesian political relationships, since they rarely mentioned place or clan names, or the name or rank of people encountered. Of far more interest in this regard are the reports of the naval officers Laferrière, Pigéard and Leconte.

21

Laferrière 1845:97-8, 100.

would bring wealth and protection for the tribe in which they had settled probably helped dispose the Puma, and Payama in particular, to adopt the Marists and assign them land, since Puma was a poor tribe, surrounded by powerful enemies, against whom any acquisition of force was a help.²² The non-appearance of a French vessel for twenty months almost certainly weakened the missionaries' position, since it demonstrated the ineffectiveness of their command over the warships, and over the resources of the fabulously wealthy place whence the ships came.

After the departure of the Bucéphale the missionaries were left with scanty resources, little enough food and few objects of exchange.²³ Their preoccupation with manual work gave them little time for proselytism,²⁴ even had the people been inclined to listen. But in fact throughout most of their twenty-month isolation the missionaries were treated with either indifference or outright hostility. At Maamat they were constantly harassed and insulted, and losses from theft

22

Leconte 1847b:820. The periodic devastation of the Puma tribe by its powerful neighbours did in fact cease after the arrival of the missionaries (*ibid.*, 835-6; Rougeyron to Girard, 2 Jan. 1846: APM/ONC, 26a). A causal relationship cannot be proven, but may well have existed.

23

Rougeyron to Supérieur-général, 1 Oct. 1845: APM/ONC, 26a; Laferrière 1845:97; Leconte 1847b:819.

24

Viard to Supérieur-général, 27 Oct. 1845: APF 1846, 18: 413-19. Rougeyron to Favier, [1846]: APM/ONC, 26a; Bérard to Min., 1 Aug. 1846: ANM, BB4 1011.

threatened to become serious. This precipitated a crisis. They barricaded their houses and garden and chased off intruders with a whip. To the Melanesians this behaviour must have seemed appalling. The missionaries' refusal to share their possessions (scanty in European terms but of incalculable value to a stone-age people, especially their iron implements) was sacrilege in a society in which wealth was communal property, and where reciprocal gift-giving symbolized every relationship between individuals and groups. Nonetheless, although the mission dwelling was sometimes surrounded by more than a thousand apparently hostile people, they contented themselves with insults and the throwing of an occasional stone or fire-brand at the building.²⁵ Eventually the collapse of the house and its unsatisfactory setting led the missionaries to move to a more deserted piece of land which the French bishop, Guillaume Douarre, had purchased from Bweon in 1844. The present-day mission is situated on this site, which was near Bweon's village of Bayup.

Great hardship continued after the move, because of the failure of successive harvests and the exhaustion of their supply of trade goods, although the inhabitants could in any case have spared little. The situation was relieved with the arrival of the warship Rhin in September 1845. Ample

25

Rougeyron to Supérieur-général, 1 Oct. 1845; to Favier, [1846] APM/ONC, 26a.

provisions, clothes, tools, seed, animals and trade goods were left, and the plight of the mission was so well publicized that within three months two more ships arrived with supplies. The sudden appearance of these rich vessels while New Caledonians suffered from the effects of drought was deeply impressive,²⁶ and Melanesian confidence was restored in the ability of the strangers to commune with powerful and generous spirits. Missionary prestige soared and many people showed eagerness to learn the prayers which they probably believed would provide the key to their acquisition of similar wealth, as well as avert the horrors of hell, which the missionaries frequently invoked.²⁷ Neighbouring tribes, especially the Mwelebeng of Pwebo and the Yengen, who had requested missionaries of their own even in the days of scarcity, increased their demands that the Puma should not alone benefit from the presence of the black-robed strangers.²⁸

The extra provisions were vital when, in July 1846, the corvette Seine was wrecked on the reefs off Pwebo. For two months between 159 and 233 French sailors camped at Bayup,

26

Bérard to Min., 1 Aug. 1846: ANM, BB4 1011.

27

Rougeyron to Girard, 2 Jan. 1846: APM/ONC, 26a; Dousset 1970:65-6.

28

Viard to Supérieur-général 27 Oct. 1845: APF 1846, 18:417; Bérard to Min., 1 Aug. 1846: ANM, BB4 1011; Leconte to Min., 31 Mar. 1847: ANOM, Carton 40, CG 1847-8; Leconte 1847b:849, 854-5.

dependent on the mission stores for survival. During this period an epidemic broke out in the village of the chief Cangun,²⁹ and by the end of the year raged throughout the region. Early in 1847 Father Pierre Rougeyron described the agony and desolation which it caused:

...la peste ... a frappé tant de victimes que des villages entiers sont déserts; on a trouvé dans certaines cases des vases de terre pleins de taros à demi-cuit, et les personnes qui préparaient ces aliments étaient étendues sans vie à côté de leur feu. On ne peut plus pleurer les morts suivant l'usage du pays ni même les enterrer séparément; on en réunit plusieurs dans la même fosse et encore les cimetières sont-ils pleins. Les cadavres restent plusieurs jours sans sépulture, tant on est fatigué de creuser des tombes.

30

He estimated that almost half the population had died in the various tribes with which the Marists were acquainted. Several chiefs, including Payama, were among the dead,³¹ but while the missionaries themselves were almost all sick, none was at any stage in danger. The epidemic and a severe famine which followed³² culminated in a series of attacks on the missionary

29

Leconte 1847b:845.

30

Rougeyron to Supérieur-général, 14 Feb.1847: APM/ONC, 26a.

31

Leconte 1847b:868-9.

32

Grange to Supérieur-général, 18 Sept. 1847: APF 1848, 20:175.

establishments, in the pillage of their storehouses, and in their expulsion from New Caledonia in August 1847.

The build-up of resentment against the missionaries was a gradual process, in which epidemic and famine played important, but not lone roles. The spectre of European occupation of Melanesian lands must have arisen during the stay of the Seine men, whose potential ability to impose their will on the inhabitants was only too obvious. About a month after the shipwreck a meeting was said to have been held of all the chiefs from the surrounding districts, and a plot conceived to attack and pillage the Europeans. It was only averted when Gwa of Mwelebeng pointed out how numerous and well-armed were the sailors, and how the Puma had received many gifts from them. He is said to have suggested that when, in the near future, the mission became rich in provisions and European goods, Douarre would not fail to share the wealth with his New Caledonian friends.³³ Unfortunately for all concerned he was wrong.

33

Leconte 1847b:849. Douarre left New Caledonia with the Seine men in September 1846, and did not return to the Pacific until the middle of 1849. The disappearance of the most respected of the missionaries probably affected Melanesian attitudes to his subordinates in the troubled months which followed. His absence may also have had an adverse affect on the behaviour towards the Melanesians of the remaining missionaries.

The collapse of the mission reflected the failure of the Marists to meet the expectations of people who had accepted them into their society, and demonstrated the bankruptcy of a policy which used the 'superstitions' and technical ignorance of Melanesians to create an impression of the intellectual, moral and physical superiority of the missionaries.³⁴ Their ability to play on the credulity and fear of the Puma seems to have saved them from harassment in the early stages, when tricks with spigots and matches put 'ces sots' to flight.³⁵ The missionaries, especially Douarre and Rougeyron, gained great influence over the Puma and made themselves respected and feared. They were thought to have control over the elements (they were asked during a drought why they had prevented rain), and baptismal water was believed to have magical influence over life and death, probably because only infants, whose mortality rate was high, and the dying were baptized.³⁶ By early 1846 war, cannibalism and theft were said to have virtually ceased at Balad, while missionary tales of hell-fire had led to a fearful desire to

34

Ibid., 819, 825.

35

Rougeyron to Favier, [1846]: APM/ONC, 26a; Besson 1847:409-10; Leconte 1847b:825, 859-60.

36

Rougeyron to Supérieur-général, 1 Oct. 1845; Montrouzier to Eymard, Jan. 1847 (typescript extracts): APM/ONC, 26a; Leconte 1847b:819, 825, 859; Rougeyron to Procureur, 4 Oct. 1858: APO.

learn the prayers which it was said would avert this fate: 'Tout le monde veut prier car personne ne veut aller en Enfer'.³⁷ It is scarcely surprising, then, that responsibility for the epidemic should be placed on the strangers who were themselves so obviously immune to the effects of the disease, and whose powers were beyond those of normal men. Early in 1847 Rougeyron noted that everywhere sorcerers were sought and put to death in an attempt to stop the mortality. He added:

C'est un mystère pour moi que ces sauvages ne nous regardent pas encore nous-mêmes comme sorciers, nous à qui ils attribuent l'épidémie qui les désolé.

38

By August, however, it would seem that no doubt remained on this point.³⁹ Furthermore, in Melanesian eyes, the malevolence of the white sorcerers was confirmed by their misdirection of the bountiful provisions which had arrived at Balad during the preceding months.

During the troubled years of 1844 and 1845, when drought and crop failure had caused privation for both

37

Rougeyron to Girard, 2 Jan. 1846: APM/ONC, 26a; see also Leconte 1847b:835-55 passim.

38

Rougeyron to Supérieur-général, 14 Feb. 1847: APM/ONC, 26a.

39

Not long before, several Puma had returned from Yengen claimin that English sandalwood traders had told them that the missionaries were sorcerers who made other men die. (Grange to Supérieur-général, 18 Sept. 1847: APF 1848, 20:175).

Melanesians and missionaries, there seems to have been a feeling amongst the former that the Marists had at least shared hardships. By late 1846-1847, however, the material well-being of the mission was assured, and successive arrivals of ships bearing goods for the French Oceanic Society, and the Solomon Islands mission, had filled to overflowing the storehouses at Balad, at a time when severe famine ravaged the region. The missionaries, despite their position of relative abundance, did little to help mitigate the effects of this disaster. They apparently reasoned that their own resources were insufficient to make much impact on the shortage. Furthermore, the bulk of the goods in the storehouses did not belong to them, and could not therefore be distributed to starving Melanesians. This distinction was naturally lost on the tribesmen. They may have regarded the stores as their own property, sent by the white man's ancestral spirits to reward those who had correctly performed the ritual taught by the missionaries.⁴⁰ They almost certainly saw the goods as communal property which the missionaries had deliberately refused to share with those who were not only in desperate need, but who had adopted the Marists into their tribe, and allotted them a portion of their land. Such apparently unnatural and inhuman behaviour destroyed the missionaries'

40

Dousset 1970:71-4 suggested this interpretation.

prestige denied them the right to Melanesian respect.⁴¹ Regarded as sorcerers and thieves, their fate was sealed, and almost the whole tribe, save only a few catechists and neophytes, mostly children, united against them in open hostility. This was the first instance of a typical New Caledonian response to the stresses of European contact. Unlike many Pacific island societies, especially in Melanesia, New Caledonians generally resorted to organized armed resistance rather than to religious movements of a millenarian kind. The suggestion of a 'cargo cult' mentality was present in 1847, but remained latent, and the method preferred to redress injustice, and acquire the material benefits of European civilization, then and later, was force.⁴²

A period of sporadic looting came to a climax in July 1847 with a full-scale attack on the Balad mission by about fifteen warriors, led by Bweon. An unpopular lay brother was killed, but the remaining Europeans, who included several laymen, escaped to a newly-created station at Pwebo. The hostility of the Mwelebeng had also been aroused, however, and the Pwebo mission was finally evacuated in August, after the timely arrival of

41

Cf. the situation on Murua (Woodlark) in 1850, where the Marist missionaries' stinginess at a time of famine in the Melanesian community destroyed their prestige and created great bitterness against them (Laracy 1969:49-51).

That Rougeyron eventually realized the incongruity of the existence side by side of missionary affluence and extreme local poverty is suggested by his remarks to Léopold Verguet during the siege of Pwebo. He was reported to have said 'qu'il était persuadé que pour réussir il fallait ... adopter entièrement leur manière de vivre; coucher comme eux, manger comme eux, et se passer des vêtements les moins indispensables!' (Verguet 1861:252). Such insights seem only to have been momentary, however.

⁴²Guiart 1951:90, fn.24; 1962:129; Valentine 1963:45-6.

the Brillante, commanded by Joseph du Bouzet, who was later to be the first governor of New Caledonia. During the retreat to the ship the Mwelebeng launched a heavy and prolonged attack on the French column. Against the wishes of the missionaries, du Bouzet undertook a severe campaign of retaliation against the Puma at Bayup and Maamat, in which many huts, coconut palms and gardens were destroyed. There were few New Caledonian casualties, however, as the Puma fled into the hills, although one Mwelebeng warrior was killed during the relief of the mission, and five Frenchmen were wounded.⁴³

During this entire period neither Puma nor Mwelebeng made a concerted attempt to wipe out the missionaries, although the hostility of both tribes was obvious. On one occasion the Puma allowed seven Europeans to escape while they plundered the mission storehouses. The Marists interpreted this as proof of their brutishness and their greed.⁴⁴ To the more

43

Du Bouzet to Min., 13 Sept. 1847: ANM, BB4 651; Grange to Supérieur-général, 18 Sept. 1847: APF 1848, 20:174-86; du Bouzet to Gouverneur des Etablissements français de l'Océanie, 22 Sept. 1847: ANOM, Carton 40, CG 1847-8; Verguet 1861:232-65.

44

Grange to Supérieur-général, 18 Sept. 1847: APF 1848, 20:180; Verguet 1861:241-2.

impartial observer, however, it would seem rather to be a comment on the Melanesians' priorities. They were more concerned to drive the missionaries from Balad, and to seize their property than to kill them. The Mwelebeng only attacked during the retreat to the warship, when the Europeans were guarded by eighty-four armed men. Yet for most of the previous month the Europeans had been besieged at Pwebo, ill-supplied with food and ammunition, and, the missionaries at least, loath to defend themselves with firearms.⁴⁵ For whatever reason, it seems clear that the Mwelebeng were unwilling to launch a serious attack until the Europeans were almost beyond their grasp. It is possible that the Melanesians preferred not to kill the missionaries, either because of their supposed prowess in sorcery, or through fear of retaliation at the hands of their naval allies. The continued survival of professed or suspected sorcerers in the indigenous society was dependent on a balance between fear and respect for their influence, and a desire to apportion blame and exact vengeance for the maleficent acts which were believed to lie

45

For examples of missionary protestations of unwillingness of defend themselves by violent means, see Grange to Supérieur-général, 18 Sept. 1847: APF 1848, 20:176; Douarre to Supérieur-général, 10 Jan. 1850: APM/ONC, 5b; Rougeyron to Supérieur-général, 10 June 1850: APF 1851, 23:383; Rougeyron to abbé de Meydat, 26 June 1855: APF 1856, 28:380-1.

behind every misfortune.⁴⁶ It is probable that the power of the missionaries was presumed to be so great as to protect their lives from the resentment aroused by its supposed misuse.⁴⁷

Several Melanesian children left with the missionaries, and thus created a situation which was to recur at Balad throughout the period of study: many members of the Puma tribe became fervent and faithful Christians, but they were only able to practise their religion in peace away from Balad, where a majority of the people, and especially the most prominent chiefs, vacillated between lukewarm acceptance of and stubborn hostility towards the mission.

FOR two years after the expulsion of the Catholic missionaries Balad does not seem to have been visited by Europeans. This must have sorely disappointed the Puma, who had no doubt hoped to intercept cargoes intended for the missionaries. The latter had learned before their evacuation that the Puma intended to plunder any vessels which anchored at Balad, and had taken steps to destroy the mission house so that it might

46

Rougeyron to Supérieur-général, 14 Feb. 1847: APM/ONC, 26a; Leconte 1847b:844-6; Montrouzier to his brother, 14 Oct. 1853: APM/Personal file (Montrouzier); Rochas 1862:287-8; Vieillard et Deplanche 1863:25; see above, pp. 31-2.

47

The unfortunate lay brother seems not only to have enjoyed less prestige than his companions but to have aroused deeper resentment.

not be used to entice the unwary visitors into a trap.⁴⁸ In September 1849 a cutter, the Mary, attached to a bêche-de-mer station which had been set up north of Balad, was cut off at Balad and four of the crew of five were massacred and eaten.⁴⁹ The following May Captain Oliver of H.M.S. Fly conducted an enquiry into the incident, and concluded in favour of the guilt of the Puma. He based his opinion on the extreme agitation and wariness shown towards him by Bweon and Cangun. Bweon, however, denied that the massacre had occurred at Balad, and claimed:

... that he was one of three chiefs of the same name and that their evil deeds fell upon him the ignorance of Europeans making them give the name of Balade to many other parts of New Caledonia.

Oliver also made enquiries at Pwebo, Colnett and Yengen, and was everywhere told that Bweon must at least have given his permission for the attack. Cangun was said to have been involved, but main responsibility was placed on Bweon. Oliver's information is probably reliable, since he had the services as interpreter of 'John Jackson' (William Diaper), 'who understood the several dialects of New Caledonia, is acquainted with many of the Chiefs and has resided in the Country'.⁵⁰

48

Grange to Supérieur-général, 18 Sept. 1847: APF 1848, 20:182; Verguet 1861:247; Rougeyron to ? , 3 Jan. 1868: APM/ONC, 11.

49

Douarre to Conseil de propagation de la foi à Paris, 11 Dec. 1849: APM/ONC, 5b; Sydney Morning Herald, 24 Jan. 1850. The incident is examined in detail in Douglas 1971:161-4.

50

H.M.S. Fly, Letterbook.

Shortly after the massacre, in October 1849, Douarre briefly visited Balad. After the people recognized him and Rougeyron they were said to have thrown down their weapons and expressed joy at the missionaries' return and regret at their own past behaviour. Cangun asked them to stay, and said that the Puma had massacred the crew of the Mary because they were in despair at having apparently driven the missionaries away for good. It thus seems clear that by this stage the Puma had become disillusioned with their 1847 policy of rejection. Rougeyron commented that he learned later that 'un petit nombre seulement de Baladiens, et des plus mauvais sujets' had participated in the Mary massacre,⁵¹ and both he and Douarre mentioned that of all the people they met only Bweon remained aloof and apparently unchanged in his attitude to the missionaries: 'sa figure annonçait je ne sais quoi de révoltant, tandis que la douleur était peinte sur toutes les autres'.⁵² These are the earliest hints in the reports of European observers of the existence of dissension within the Puma tribe, and of a decline in Bweon's prestige, probably consequent upon the unsatisfactory outcome of the events of 1847. It is reasonable to assume, however, that the division was already far more

51

Rougeyron to Supérieur-général, 10 June 1850: APF 1851, 23:380-2.

52

Douarre to Conseil de la propagation de la foi à Paris, 11 Dec. 1849: APM/ONC, 5b.

deeply ingrained than is suggested by this meagre evidence, since within two years the tribe was riven by discord, on to which had been grafted strong religious overtones.

Douarre refused to remain at Balad in 1849 in order to punish the Puma and test their sincerity, but promised to return in the future.⁵³ The missionaries took away twenty-three neophytes who, despite persecution, had attempted to remain faithful to Christianity. They were eventually taken to Futuna (Hoorn Islands),⁵⁴ where they were joined by a further forty-three people from Balad and Pwebo, including Cangun's brothers, Gwa and Undo, who had helped lead the opposition in 1847.⁵⁵ At this stage, then, the mission's most influential supporters were Bweon's rivals, while Bweon himself remained hostile. It is not unlikely that traditional political considerations had already begun to determine the religious alignment of the leading clans of the tribe. After a year the New Caledonians in Futuna were baptized, by which

53

P. Rougeyron, 'Biographie du R.P. Gagnière', 32-4: AVNC.

54

Marist missionaries arrived in Futuna in 1837, and despite early setbacks had converted the entire population by 1845 (Coste 1965:241-2). By 1850 it had become a model Christian community run on theocratic lines, and was no doubt expected to provide a salutary example for the New Caledonians. The future was to prove, however, that the lessons learned were not always those intended.

55

Rougeyron to Supérieur-général, 10 June 1850: APF 1851, 23:382, 387; Rougeyron, 'Biographie du R.P. Gagnière', 55-7, 72: AVNC.

time preparations were under way for a return to their homeland, where it was hoped that they would form the nucleus for a rapid conversion of the Puma and the Mwelebeng.

The Marists suffered a second expulsion from the mainland of New Caledonia in January 1850, with the failure of attempts to set up stations at Yengen and Yate.⁵⁶ This caused for Douarre a period of discouragement and uncertainty about the possibility of eventual success for the mission in New Caledonia,⁵⁷ while doubt existed also as to the future of the archipelago in the context of great power politics. The missionaries believed annexation by Britain to be imminent, and the visits to the east coast of H.M.S. Havannah in September 1849 and October 1850, H.M.S. Fly in May 1850 and the schooner Bramble in October 1851 reinforced this view. On the first two visits the British warships were accompanied by George Augustus Selwyn, the Anglican Bishop of New Zealand, in his schooner Undine, which confirmed for the Marists the indissoluble relationship between Englishmen and Protestantism:⁵⁸

56

Douarre to Conseil de la propagation de la foi à Paris, 11 Dec. 1849; Douarre to Supérieur-général, 6 Jan. 1850, 10 Jan. 1850: APM/ONC, 5b; Rougeyron to Supérieur-général, 10 June 1850 APF 1851, 23:383; Rougeyron, 'Biographie due R.P. Gagnière', 35-7: AVNC; Goujon, 'Journal de l'île des Pins', 20 Jan. 1850.

57

Douarre to Supérieur-général, 6 Jan. 1850, 10 Jan. 1850: APM/ONC, 5b; Rougeyron to Favre, 10 Oct. 1856: *ibid.*, 5d.

⁵⁸Goujon, 'Journal de l'île des Pins', 12 May 1850; Gouverneur des Etablissements français de l'Océanie to Min., 11 Mar. 1851 (quoting extracts from a letter from Douarre); Commissaire de la République aux îles de la Société to Min., 10 Oct. 1851: ANOM, Carton 40, CG 1849-52; Douarre to Supérieur-général, 20 Oct. 1851: APM/ONC, 5b.

Le Gouvernement Anglais y [New Caledonia]
 a arboré ou y arborera... son pavillon...
 Outre l' indifférence des naturels, nous
 aurons encore à combattre le protestantisme,
 peu redoutable en lui-même, s'il n'employait
 pas la calomnie.

59

Douarre had returned to France late in 1846 to publicize the need for more missionaries in New Caledonia, and to remind the Government of the danger of annexation by Britain. In accordance with the national formula of religious affiliation in operation at that stage in the South Pacific, British annexation meant to the Marists a calamity which would almost certainly ruin Catholicism in New Caledonia. Douarre's warnings went unheeded at the time, and by the early 1850's, with Protestant influence strong in the Loyalty Islands and regular visits to the New Caledonian mainland by Bishop Selwyn, the danger seemed acute.

THE Balad mission was finally re-established in May 1851, and the Christians returned from Futuna in January 1852. Douarre had occasion to regret his decision not to stay in 1849, as the hoped-for change in attitude of the Puma had not eventuated. They continued to express eagerness for the missionaries' return,⁶⁰ however, since they had been starved of contact with Europeans and its attendant material benefits

59

Douarre to Supérieur-général, 2 July 1850: APM/ONG, 5b.

60

Douarre to Supérieur-général, 13 Mar. 1851: APM/ONG, 5b; Rougeyron, 'Biographie du R.P. Gagnière', 33: AVNC.

for nearly four years. Bweon's disposition seemed to have improved, although he retained his reserve and never became a fervent Christian.

Almost at once a village began to form about the new mission, although the Marists themselves were not immediately convinced of the need for a separate Christian settlement, and the process was instituted by the leading Balad convert. Indeed, Rougeyron believed at first that it would be useful for the Christians to return to their clans, where they might influence their kinsmen in favour of the new religion and way of life. A few, Undo and Gwa among them, were persuaded by their relatives to go back to their villages, and they eventually abandoned Christianity and retook the old ways.⁶¹ They were later to become implacable enemies of the new religion and its Melanesian supporters.

For about a year the missionaries seemed destined to succeed at Balad, but once again an epidemic showed how shallow their influence had been on the bulk of the population, and how obdurate was the core of the traditionalist opposition. The sickness at first raged among the Christians, decimating the population of their village, and its immediate effect was to revive the old belief in Christianity as the religion of death. Christians became martyrs to their faith, while

61

Rougeyron, 'Biographie du R.P. Gagnière', 69, 72: AVNC.

everywhere adherence to custom reappeared. Persecution of Christians began, and culminated in a surprise attack on the mission village, in which a catechumen was killed before the mission party rallied and drove off the attackers. A period of calm followed, but the high mortality rate continued and eventually spread to the pagans as well.⁶² The situation differed from 1847, when the missionaries had been isolated and opposed by almost the whole tribe. By 1852 they had many supporters, and two apparently irreconcilable groups, the converts and those who demanded adherence to custom, vied for the support of the tribe.

The division of loyalty in the tribe as a whole was by no means clear cut. At Balad and elsewhere a majority of people probably paid some heed to mission teachings, while their way of life, attitudes and beliefs remained essentially unchanged. The missionaries generally fared well during tranquil periods, because of the value of the goods at their disposal, the curiosity felt towards their teachings, and the awe and respect in which they were usually held. But they were rejected by all but committed Christians in times of public calamity, which traditional knowledge could explain only in terms of the malevolence of the priests and their ability to invoke occult forces over which the tribesmen had no

62

Ibid., 70-4, 89, 95.

control.⁶³ Those who formed the nucleus of the Christian party in a tribe were notable because they lived close to the mission establishment in a large village, which radically altered the traditional pattern of scattered hamlets set among the gardens of individual clans.⁶⁴ The state of mission fortunes at a given time in a particular area could be gauged by the number of people who wore clothes, while a widespread return to traditional undress was usually one of the first indications of a revival of custom. Similarly, the first sign of persecution of Christians was generally a demand by pagan chiefs that clothes and rosaries should be abandoned and the ancient ceremonies attended.⁶⁵ The pagan party was marked by an attachment to custom which was sometimes dissimulated, but in times of crisis became aggressive. The pagans were led by those who stood to lose most prestige and influence under the new dispensation, elders, sorcerers, and the like.⁶⁶

63

Cf. the Isle of Pines (Goujon, 'Journal', 10 Sept. 1848, 10 June 1852); Pwebo (Rougeyron to Supérieur-général, 28 Oct. 1855: APM/ONC, 5d); Tuo (Rougeyron to Procureur, 15 June 1860: APO); Wagap (Vincent to Procureur, 14 July 1868: APO). See also Anon., 'Etat de la Nouvelle-Calédonie en 1860 et 1861': APM/ONC, 19.

64

Tardy de Montravel to Min., 25 Dec. 1854: ANOM, Carton 40, CG 1854; Rougeyron to Procureur, [c.Aug.1859], 23 Oct. 1862: APO.

65

Rougeyron to Supérieur-général, 14 Feb. 1847: APM/ONC, 26a; Rougeyron to abbé de Meydat, 26 June 1855: APF 1856, 28:380; Rougeyron, 'Biographie de R.P. Gagnière', 71: AVNC.

66

P. Rougeyron, 'Abrégé de la vie de Hippolyte Bonou': AVNC; Goujon, 'Journal de l'île des Pins', 15 Sept. 1854; Vigouroux to Procureur, May 1859: APO.

Alignment in such conflicts between old and new loyalties was determined by a variety of motives, and conditioned by local circumstances. At Balad, however, the particular commitment of the leading chiefs resulted, in part at least, from political considerations and clan rivalry. Cangun and his brothers encouraged the missionaries' return, and were at first its most influential supporters, while Bweon remained aloof. As a matter of policy, however, the missionaries always solicited the support of the most important chief in an area where they had settled, and, for all that his prestige was limited and his authority not unquestioned, Bweon was still high chief of the Puma tribe. Likewise, Bweon was prepared to trade lukewarm support for the mission for a power base against his opponents within the tribe. Not long after the return to Balad, therefore, Bweon had become nominal leader of the Christians. The actual leaders were two clan chiefs, one of whom was Bweon's son-in-law.⁶⁷ For their part, Cangun and his brothers rejected the mission and became leaders of the traditionalists. Their motives are not entirely clear, and, apart from the epidemic, doubtless included such factors as pressure from clan elders and jealousy at the favour shown by the missionaries to early

67

Montrouzier to his brother, 14 Oct. 1853: APM/Personal file (Montrouzier); Rougeyron to abbé de Meydat, 26 June 1855: APF 1856, 28:380; Rougeyron, 'Biographie du R.P. Gagnière', 73: AVNC.

converts who were of lesser status. It is not unreasonable, however, to suggest that their volte-face was connected with the missionaries' successful attempt to gain Bweon to their cause.

By 1853 mission progress at Balad had ceased, and familiar accusations were rife against the missionaries as instigators of disease, who were themselves immune:

... la conviction que nous les faisons mourir était universelle chez nos pauvres sauvages, il fallait aller chercher dans les cases les plus obscures les malades qu'on nous cachait.

69

A turning point came at the end of April, when Douarre succumbed to the sickness. This created sympathy among many of the pagans for the mission's loss, and weakened the suspicion that the missionaries were deliberate agents of death.⁷⁰ By September 1853 the epidemic had waned, which reassured the Christians and removed one of the most telling arguments of the opposition. The future success of the mission seemed assured when, on 23 September 1853, Rear-Admiral Auguste Febvrier des Pointes arrived at Balad on the warship Phoque,

68

Montrouzier to Supérieur-général, 3 July 1853: APM/ONC, 26c; Rougeyron, 'Biographie du R.P.Gagnière', 95: AVNC.

⁶⁹

Forestier to Supérieur-général, 20 Sept. 1853: APM/ONC, 26c.

⁷⁰

Montrouzier to Supérieur-général, 3 July 1853: APM/ONC, 26c. Douarre was replaced as head of the mission by Rougeyron, who became provicar apostolic. He remained in this position until 1874, when the vicariate of New Caledonia was once more put in charge of a bishop.

with instructions to annex New Caledonia in the name of the Emperor of France.⁷¹ Balad was chosen for the initial ceremony of annexation and as the site of the first establishment of the new colony because the presence of missionaries there and at Pwebo was expected to have modified the ferocity of the inhabitants and disposed them in favour of the French. This was an important consideration in view of the insufficient forces available to implement annexation.⁷²

THE coming of a European power to Balad foreshadowed a change in the relationship between the missionaries and the Puma, and altered the conditions of contact between Melanesians and

71

The question of the annexation of New Caledonia as an aspect of French internal and inter-Ministry politics and of international relations is not relevant to this study. The diplomatic background to the French action was discussed in detail in Person 1954:148-85. He also traced the development within France of official opinion on the matter. Unfortunately this work is almost totally undocumented, but use was made of mission and official French archival material, and perhaps of some official British records. See also Roberts 1929, II: 516-30; Jore 1959, II:165-71; Newbury 1956:381-4.

The decision to annex seems to have been made within the Ministry for the Navy and Colonies, and the act accomplished in the face of belated, anxious and perhaps unwilling acquiescence from the Foreign Ministry, which appears to have played no part in the formulation of policy (correspondence between the Ministre des Affaires Etrangères and the Ministre de la Marine des Colonies, 14 & 22 Feb. 1854: ANOM, Carton 40, CG 1854). The policy-making process seems to have been a fairly haphazard affair - in October 1856 the Minister for the Navy mentioned that he had no record of the views of his predecessor on the future planned for New Caledonia when its annexation was proposed to the Emperor ('Note du Ministre', 12 Oct. 1856: ANOM, Carton 42).

⁷²Min. to French Consul, Sydney, 9 June 1846: ANOM, Carton 40, 1845-6; Laguerre to Tardy de Montravel, 16 July 1853 (encl. in Tardy de Montravel to Febvrier des Pointes, 10 Jan. 1854): *ibid.* CG 1854; Febvrier des Pointes to Min., 19 Oct. 1853: *ibid.*, CG 1853.

Europeans and the rate of acculturation in the traditional society. Despite some apprehension as to the possible consequences of annexation, the missionaries supported the French wholeheartedly, because their arrival averted the possibility of the seizure of New Caledonia by Britain.⁷³ The Marists used all the influence they had acquired at Balad to dispose the Puma to accept French sovereignty. They tried to explain that henceforth there would exist in New Caledonia an authority superior to any of the chiefs; that Melanesians would receive protection, provided they obeyed and cooperated with the French and did not initiate hostilities; and most important, that their land rights would be respected.⁷⁴ The missionaries also acted as interpreters, mediated in the transfer to the French of a piece of land for the construction of a blockhouse, and made available to the admiral their house and their resources.

The internal division in the Puma tribe which had helped determine the religious affiliation of its leading chiefs was again reflected in their attitudes to annexation. Bweon and the Christians acquiesced at once, whereas Cangun and most of the pagans reacted with hostility and suspicion. The chiefs especially feared that the presence of the French would seriously compromise their freedom of action. Within two months their worst fears had been realized when, to their consternation, des Pointes ordered the arrest

⁷³ See below, pp.142-6.

⁷⁴ Tardy de Montravel to Min., 8 July 1854: ANOM, Carton 40, CG 1854; Montrouzier to évêque de Montpellier, 4 Nov. 1855: APM/ON 26d; du Bouzet to Min., 25 Nov. 1857b: ANOM, Carton 42; Salinis 1892:176.

of a chief who had murdered a woman accused of sorcery. A plot was conceived to kidnap the admiral, but it was betrayed by a Christian.⁷⁵ The French made a bloodless night-time raid on several villages, in which a number of chiefs were arrested.⁷⁶ The efficiency with which this was carried out and the ability of the French to conduct military operations at night seems to have impressed the Puma, and quietened opposition for a time. Cangun, who was one of the prisoners, later escaped, but Father Xavier Montrouzier managed to dissuade des Pointes from the policy of brutal repression which he considered pursuing. Undo and two other chiefs were exiled to Tahiti, while Cangun was allowed to return to his village after formally accepting French sovereignty and humbly promising to behave in the future.⁷⁷ He continued to nurse his resentment, and the dispositions of the pagans did not improve. Their hostility, however, seems to have been directed less at the French as an occupying force than at the French as friends of the mission and, more particularly, of Bweon. Captain Louis Tardy de Montravel, the senior officer on the New Caledonian naval detachment during 1854, reported in this vein:

75

Montrouzier 1860:50-1; Salinis 1892:257-92 passim.

76

Febvrier des Pointes to Min., 30 Dec. 1853: Collection Margry; de Brun 1933:648-9.

77

Salinis 1892:299-319.

... c'est à ce centre [the village of Waban], ou plutôt à son chef Tiangoun, que se rattachent les autres villages pour faire opposition à Philippo [Bweon] et à notre occupation, opposition sourde et cachée, mais réelle; c'est à Ouenbane que se trament les petits complots, que s'organisent les vols et que les matelots trouvent l'emploi de leurs moyens de séduction.

Réfractaire à tout progrès, par jalousie contre Philippo, son chef suzerain, plutôt que par opposition à la mission, Tiangoun, qui s'était trouvé enveloppé dans une espèce de complot, a seul été épargné; l'impunité ne l'a pas rendu plus dévoué à notre cause, mais n'a servi qu'à le rendre plus prudent et plus circonspect.... il évite soigneusement aujourd'hui de se compromettre...

78

Neither the Marists nor the naval authorities were under any illusions regarding Bweon's prestige and authority, which had never been unquestioned at Balad, and which had been weakened further with the advent of the French by their denial to him of the right to use force to exact obedience.⁷⁹ Under the circumstances, however, it was in the interests of both to bolster his position at the expense of the refractory chiefs. The missionaries hoped thereby to obtain a powerful Christian chief who would control the tribe according to their advice and principles; the authorities wanted a cooperative intermediary who would be strong enough to enforce obedience on his fellow tribesmen, regarded as his 'subjects', and who could

78

Tardy de Montravel to Min., 25 Dec. 1854: ANOM, Carton 40, CG 1854.

⁷⁹ Montrouzier to his brother, 14 Oct. 1853: APM/Personal file (Montrouzier); Tardy de Montravel to Min., 27 Apr. 1854, 25 Dec. 1854: ANOM, Carton 40, CG 1854; Montrouzier to évêque de Montpellier, 4 Nov. 1855: APM/ONC, 26d; Rougeyron, 'Biographie du R.P. Gagnière', 32.

at the same time be held to account for the safety of Europeans within the tribal boundaries. Accordingly, in January 1854, Bweon formally recognized French sovereignty in the name of the Puma tribe, and committed himself: '... faire respecter tout sujet français ou autre étranger qui viendrait s'établir sur le territoire de ma tribu'.⁸⁰ Yet this was not a promise he could keep, as he could not guarantee the submission to his authority of the other chiefs. Thus at missionary instigation he requested the right to set up a code of laws which would translate relevant parts of French law to the New Caledonian situation, and which would give him the means to enforce his authority. This was granted, and the code instituted. It provided for the appointment of several gendarmes and promised them remuneration at government expense, and gave the tribal chief the right to punish certain offenders according to a nominated scale.⁸¹

Early in 1855 du Bouzet claimed that the code had strengthened Bweon's position.⁸² However, the refusal or inability of the French to keep their promises so disillusioned Bweon that he turned against both the missionaries and the French, whom, like most Melanesians at this stage, he

80

'Reconnaissance et acceptation de la souveraineté de S.M. Napoléon III par Felipe Bouéone, Chef de la tribu de Pouma', 25 Jan. 1854: ANOM, Carton 67.

81

Correspondence between Bweon and Tardy de Montravel, 7 & 8 Feb 1854; 'Code pénal de la tribu de Pouma', 9 Feb. 1854: ANOM, Carton 67; Tardy de Montravel to Min., 27 April 1854: ANOM, Carton 40, CG 1854.

82

Du Bouzet to Min., 14 Feb. 1855a: ANOM, Carton 40, CG 1855.

identified. By June 1855 the code was no longer enforced, in part because of the failure of the administration to carry out its promise to pay the local gendarmes. More seriously, six would-be colonists arrived unexpectedly and without official permission at Balad, where the commandant of the garrison thought it was his duty to accede to their arrogant demands for land.⁸³ Bweon was eventually provoked into planning a full-scale attack on the soldiers and the mission. Despite the exasperation of most of the tribe, he inspired so little confidence that he failed to obtain much support and the project was dropped. It had become evident to the missionaries, however, that future progress among the pagans of Balad would be limited because of Bweon's weakness and lack of energy, and that conflicts were bound to occur, necessitating the use of force in self-defence if the mission party was to survive. The faith of the Christians was considered to be in danger at Balad, exposed as it was to the importunities of their pagan relatives and to constant reminders of their own recent past. Since a priest could no longer be spared to serve the relatively few Christians there, it was eventually decided that the mission should be abandoned and the Christians taken to a new station which would be created near Port-de-France.

83

Du Bouzet to Min., 10 June 1855: ANOM, Carton 40, CG 1855; Montrouzier to évêque de Montpellier, 4 Nov. 1855: APM/ONC, 26d.

The project was carried out in October 1855, when 120 Christians and neophytes from Balad, not including Bweon, were settled at Conception.⁸⁴

Missionary scruples against answering force with force were overcome at Conception. The Balad Christians, together with later arrivals from Tuo and Pwebo, formed the front-line of the defences of Port-de-France against a coalition of southern tribes, which united in an attempt to destroy Port-de-France and the mission establishments of Conception and St-Louis, and drive the foreigners into the sea. Hostilities began in earnest in the latter half of 1856, and the region was not finally considered pacified until the end of 1859, although the last major expedition near Port-de-France was in December 1857.⁸⁵ The Christians acted as auxiliaries of the colonial authorities in almost every expedition against the insurgents, but the benefits which they gained as allies of the administration were outweighed by the appalling death-rate from disease which raged at Conception

84

Rougeyron to abbé de Meydat, 26 June 1855, 28 Oct. 1855: APF 1856, 28:380-1, 383-5; Rougeyron to Supérieur-général, 29 Oct. 1855: APM/ONC, 5d; Montrouzier to évêque de Montpellier, 4 Nov. 1855: ibid., 26d; Montrouzier to his brother, 10 Nov. 1855: APM/ Personal file (Montrouzier).

85

Testard to Rougeyron, (various letters, mostly undated): APM/ONC, 1a; Forestier, 'Pièces justificatives', [c. 1864]: ibid. 1b; du Bouzet to Min., 31 Dec. 1857: ANOM, Carton 42; du Bouzet to Saisset, 25 Oct. 1858: ANOM, Carton 231; [Foucher] 1890:10-77 passim.

until at least 1863.⁸⁶

At the beginning of 1855 the population of the Puma tribe was fairly reliably estimated at not more than 1,000.⁸⁷ No more than 150 people seem to have gone to Conception, and yet by early 1856 the Balad region was described as almost deserted.⁸⁸ The resentment against the French of Bweon and the people remaining at Balad after the departure of the Christians did not diminish, and towards the end of 1856, at a time of war between the Paak of Bonde and the Balad garrison, Bweon led an unsuccessful attack on the blockhouse, which was beaten off with the loss of six Puma warriors.⁸⁹ Bweon fled into the mountains, where he led a miserable existence.⁹⁰ He was deposed from the chieftainship by the French in November 1856, and replaced by Gwa. At about this time an allegorical representation of the persecution of Bweon was popular amongst the northern tribes, where it was widely told to stir up anti-European feeling. Father Pierre Lambert explained its significance as follows:

86

Rougeyron to Supérieur-général, 7 June 1856: APM/ONC, 5d; Poupinel to Supérieur-général, 2 Dec. 1857: APF 1858, 30:286-7; Rougeyron to Supérieur-général, [April 1858]; Rougeyron to Procureur, [1859]; Soeur de la Croix to Procureur, 7 Nov. 1860; Montrouzier to Procureur, 12 Nov. 1860; Rougeyron to Procureur, 29 Jan. 1861, 23 Oct. 1862: APO; Rougeyron to Supérieur-général, 21 Oct. 1863: APM/ONC, 20.

87

Du Bouzet to Min., 14 Feb. 1855a: ANOM, Carton 40, CG 1855.

88

Laurent to Min., 13 Jan. 1857: ANOM, Carton 42.

89

Montrouzier to his brother, 29 Mar. 1857: APM/Personal file (Montrouzier); du Bouzet to Saisset, 25 Oct. 1858: ANOM, Carton 231; Vieillard et Deplanche 1863:28.

90

Garnier 1867:199; 1901:267.

... une espèce de chant allégorique où Philippo, chef de Balade, est désigné sous le nom du chef de Tuo, et le chef de Tendo n'est autre que le capitaine du Blokaus de Balade, peut-être même tous les français. Le capitaine est représenté comme un génie implacable, acharné à la perte de sa victime.

The chief of Tando was depicted as hounding his quarry from one end of the island to the other, until eventually the pursuer himself fell to the axes of two children:

... ils le font tuer par deux enfants, et cela à dessein de montrer qu'ils n'ont pas même besoin d'hommes pour se défaire de leurs ennemis. Tel doit être, selon eux, le sort du capitaine qu'on doit attirer dans un guet-apens. La suite a prouvé le contraire; car dès les premières tentatives d'hostilité, Philippo a payé de sa personne.

91

After several years of fugitive existence, Bweon was finally captured and shot on the orders of the commandant of the Balad garrison, after being implicated in the burning of the Pwebo church in December 1858.⁹²

Thus through European agency the brother of Payama and Cangun gained total victory over Bweon, whose irresolution prevented his adoption of a consistent course of either support or opposition to European penetration, and who failed

91

Lambert to Poupinel [1860]: APM/ONC, 21; see also Rochas 1862:215-20.

92

Gagnière to Procureur, 2 Jan. 1859: APO; de Cintré to Saisset, 23 May 1859: ANM, BB4 723; Anon., 'Extraits du Journal du R.P. Rougeyron et de Mgr. d'Amata. Dates pour servir à la vie du R.P. Gagnères': AVNC; cf. Garnier 1901:267-8.

at every stage after 1847 to unite behind him the tribe of which he was high chief. He was the victim both of his personal inadequacies, and of an intra-tribal power struggle, which originated in traditional antipathies and ambitions, and in which his opponents saw more clearly the implications of European occupation. Bweon did not understand a basic tenet of the new régime: namely, that the imposition of Christianity was not a necessary consequence of annexation. The administration did not intend to provoke unnecessary Melanesian resistance by forcing missionaries upon those who rejected them peacefully, provided these tribes gave active support and complete obedience to the authorities.⁹³ Bweon, after his disillusionment, attacked all Europeans indiscriminately, and paid with his life. Gwa, on the other hand, realized that he did not have to be a Christian if he came to terms with the government, and that by so doing he would gain valuable support towards the realization of his local political ambitions. He no doubt considered, correctly from his viewpoint, that he had cleverly used the Europeans to out-manoeuver his traditional rival. For their part, the French congratulated themselves on their manipulation of the traditional rivals to gain their own ends. A naval officer commented:

93

Tardy de Montravel to Min., 8 July 1854: ANOM, Carton 40, CG 1854.

Dans les tribus où le Premier chef se montre hostile on trouve à s'appuyer sur le second chef ou tout autre petit chef de sang noble qui ne demande pas mieux que de supplanter le Titulaire. C'est ainsi que nous sommes devenus maîtres à Balade.

94

Such is the stuff of which successful compromise is made.

Rougeyron visited Balad in April 1858, and reported that scarcely anyone lived in the district; most were dead while others had taken refuge in neighbouring tribes.⁹⁵ An official report of much the same date said that a few people still at Balad were mostly engaged on public works, while the chiefs referred to the commandant of the garrison on all important matters.⁹⁶ Towards the end of 1858 it became necessary to evacuate the Balad post, which no longer served a useful purpose. Because of official concern that the Puma would be left at the mercy of hostile neighbours, who resented their subservience to the government, it was arranged that the people who remained at Balad should be transferred to the mission station of St-Louis, where an agricultural centre was about to be created. Only thirteen Puma eventually went to St-Louis, however, and the remainder were formed by

94

Forget to Min., 15 June 1860: Collection Margry.

95

Rougeyron to Supérieur-général, April 1858 : APO; de Broglie to ? , 28 Dec. 1859: APM/ONG, 4.

96

Testard to Min., 23 Apr., 29 Aug. 1858: ANOM, Carton 42.

Governor Saisset into a native militia under Gwa's leadership.⁹⁷

These people had come to terms with the fact of European occupation and with the realities of French power. After Bweon's deposition they had become staunch allies of the government, and they remained so throughout the 1860's. They participated in an expedition in 1859 against their kinsmen and allies, the Bwarat of Yengen, and in several subsequent wars and expeditions against rebellious or unpacified tribes.⁹⁸ Their relationship with the Marists was purely pragmatic. At the end of 1859 they aided their traditional enemies, the Mwelebeng Christians, against a coalition of tribes hostile to both the mission and the administration.⁹⁹ The subsequent Christian victory greatly enhanced missionary prestige, and led to a general movement in their favour, in which the Puma took part.¹ A complicating factor appeared, however, with the arrival in June 1862 of Governor Charles Guillain, who disapproved of

97

Du Bouzet to Saisset, 25 Oct. 1858: ANOM, Carton 231; Saisset to Min., 13 Feb. 1859: ANOM, Carton 42; Rougeyron to Procureur, 22 & 29 July, 7 Sept. 1859; Montrouzier to Procureur, 17 Aug. 1859; APO; 'le poste de Balade a été évacué ... par ordre de M.le Gouverneur Saisset', 19 Aug. 1859:BO 1859-60: 157; 'décision du Gouverneur plaçant un détachement de la compagnie indigène à Kanala', 22 Aug. 1859: ibid., 157-8.

⁹⁸ Saisset to Min., 12 Sept. 1859:ANM, BB4 723; Guillain to Min., 11 Feb. 1863:ANOM, Carton 171; Mathieu to Guillain, 1 Dec. 1863:ANOM, Carton 26; CG 1855-64; Mon., 29 Oct. 1865; 'Etat nominatif des indigènes proposés pour des récompenses', 1 July 1870: ANOM, Carton 171.

⁹⁹ Saisset to Min., 1 Feb. 1860: ANM, BB4 723.

¹ See below, pp.132-3.

missionary pretensions and their influence over Melanesians, and began an immediate campaign to diminish both.² Faithful servants of the administration, the Puma responded to the new climate of opinion, and gladly abandoned their façade of cooperation with an old enemy. When the governor's displeasure focussed on the Christian tribes of the north-east, he found willing allies in Gwa and Undo, who had been returned from exile in Tahiti in 1863. With official blessing the two chiefs persuaded Christians at Bonde and Arama to apostatize, and were active in harassment of the Mwelebeng.³

The chiefs and the whole Puma tribe profited from their stance: Undo, Gwa and Gwa's successor, Mweau Gwa, were all awarded medals for their service by a grateful governor; during 1868, when almost every tribe in the region was compelled to provide workers for onerous corvées at Pwebo, the Puma were exempt; unlike most of their neighbours, their land rights remained more or less intact, and no colonist had settled permanently at Balad before 1870.⁴ Despite their subservience to the government, the Puma had far more autonomy in the internal administration of their tribe than did the Mwelebeng, where the missionaries, with the aid of a pious chief, developed a theocratic form of tribal government. Furthermore,

2

See below, pp. 164-73.

3

Emprin to Procureur, 5 Mar. 1865; Guitta to Procureur, 9 Apr. 1865; Gagnière to Procureur, 3 May 1865: APO.

4

See below, pp.

as valued allies of the French, the Puma were assured of military aid in the event of enemy attack, and they enjoyed greater independence and freedom from harassment by aggressive and more powerful neighbouring tribes than they had traditionally.⁵

It is in the reduction of their numbers that the cost to the Puma of nearly thirty years of intensive contact with Europeans becomes apparent. European estimates of the numerical strength of pre-literate societies are notoriously unreliable, but the figures which indicate the population decline of the Puma tribe after 1843 are reasonably accurate, because they were based, except for a four-year period, on the continuous and intimate acquaintance of Europeans with the members of this tribe. The population of the Puma was reported to be 1,500 in 1846;⁶ 1,000 in 1855;⁷ 538 in 1857;⁸ 200 in 1860;⁹ barely 100 in 1864.¹⁰ The 1857 figure is important because it was based on a local census conducted by the commandant of the Balad post, a man with some knowledge of the area. The decline is staggering, even allowing for considerable

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Du Bouzet to Min., 14 Feb. 1855a: ANOM, Carton 40, CG 1855.

6

Leconte 1847b:822.

7

Du Bouzet to Min., 14 Feb. 1855a: ANOM, Carton 40, CG 1855.

8

Du Bouzet to Min., 25 Nov. 1857b: ANOM, Carton 42.

9

Vieillard et Deplanche 1863:21.

10

Garnier 1901:233.

inaccuracy in the first two estimates, which seems unnecessary, since both relied on information received from the missionaries. The exodus to Conception and the dispersion to other tribes which occurred in the mid-50's were to some extent responsible, but the most serious agent of depopulation must have been disease. Although in New Caledonia generally during the period of study, introduced sickness and epidemic diseases seem to have most affected Christians, the rejection of the mission by the Puma came too late, and their relations with Europeans and nearby Christian tribes were too frequent, to enable them to escape the worst effects of high mortality and periodic devastating epidemics.

The Puma endured violent epidemics in 1846-7 and 1852-3; late in 1860 there were many deaths from measles, which swept through most of New Caledonia and the Loyalty Islands, and elsewhere in the Pacific at about the same time;¹¹ again, both Undo and Gwa succumbed during an epidemic in 1866.¹² Even in the intervening periods mortality was high, especially among those who had emigrated to Conception. An ominous portent for future demographic recovery was the fact that the Puma, like many other tribes, suffered by the mid-60's from a serious shortage of women.¹³ Indeed, it was only in the second

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Mathieu to Durand, 22 July 1861: ANOM, Carton 42; Forestier to Procureur, 7 Aug. 1861: APO; J.M. Villard, 'Mémoire sur la catastrophe de Pouébo en 1867': AVNC.

12

Guitta to Rougayron, 27 May 1866: APM/ONG, 25; Garnier 1901: 301-2.

13

Garnier 1901:233, 266.

quarter of the twentieth century that significant population increase began at Balad, in accordance with the trend throughout New Caledonia.¹⁴

14

Sarasin [1917]:38, 87; Métais 1953a:99-111, 128 .

CHAPTER III

YENGEN

THE first Europeans known to have made contact with the people of the Balad area were members of British and French exploring expeditions. Subsequent visitors between 1843 and 1853 were mostly either naval personnel or were connected with the Marist mission. In contrast, Yengen seems not to have been visited by Europeans before 1843, and the early arrivals were almost all Sydney-based traders come in search of sandalwood and bêche-de-mer. Their on-shore agents were the first Europeans to reside in the area.

Notable in every early account of the people of Yengen was the dominance of the chief known to the English as Basset and to the French as Bouarate. The history of the people of the lower Yengen valley is inseparable from that of the Bwarat chieftainship, and the 'Yengen tribe' can be defined as those clans which recognized Bwarat as chief. The prestige of the Bwarat clan was such that its name was applied to the whole tribe.¹ The size of the tribe, Bwarat's power within it, and the extent of his influence over neighbouring groups were variously estimated by contemporary European observers. It was generally agreed that Yengen was one of the larger and more warlike tribes in the northern part of the island, and Bwarat a powerful and influential chief,²

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Leenhardt 1930:105.

2

E.g., Leconte 1847b:822, 850-2; Erskine 1853:356; Bérard 1854:97; Lascazas 1855:15; Inglis 1887:304-5.

but exaggeration was common. Especially after 1853, Yengen was frequently referred to as the paramount tribe in the north, and the Bwarat chiefs as the inspiration of most anti-French activities in this region.³ Thus to du Bouzet Bwarat was 'l'âme et le moteur de toutes les intrigues ourdies contre nous depuis la prise de possession',⁴ while the popular impression of the tribe was similar to Garnier's, reported in 1867:

... la tribu de Hienguène... était autrefois non-seulement la plus puissante, mais avait encore une sorte de suzeraineté sur toutes les tribus environnantes et jusqu'à la pointe nord de la Nouvelle-Calédonie.

5

It seems certain that in New Caledonian terms Yengen was a numerous and closely-knit tribal group, and Bwarat a highly-respected chief. Other tribes, however, could at least equal the power and influence of Yengen, and Bwarat was not the ruthless autocrat many Europeans depicted. His authority and prestige were consistent with his position as chief of a large tribe, but

3

E.g., Tardy de Montravel to Min., 8 July 1854: ANOM, Carton 40, CG 1854; du Bouzet to Saisset, 25 Oct. 1858: ANOM, Carton 231; Montrouzier to his parents, 16 Jan. 1859: APM/Personal file (Montrouzier); Moniteur universel, 17 Dec. 1859; Saisset to Min., 1 Feb. 1860: ANM.BB4 723; Durand to Min., 12 Aug. 1861: ANOM, Carton 26, CG 1855-64; Rougeyron to Procureur, 1 Apr. 1863: APO.

4

Du Bouzet to Min., 25 Nov. 1857b: ANOM, Carton 42.

5

Garnier 1901:222; see also Mon., 7 Mar. 1869; de la Hautière 1869:87-8; Patouillet 1872:50-1.

they depended on the respect and affection which he commanded as an able and intelligent chief, rather than on the force at his disposal.⁶

It is difficult, if not impossible, to determine accurately the traditional sphere of influence of the Yengen tribe (Waap, like the Puma of Balad), but the apparent power which so impressed early visitors may have been in part a result of the regional monopoly of trade with Europeans which the Yengen enjoyed for several years.⁷ It is hard to delineate traditional patterns of settlement and allegiances in this area because they have, during almost a century of occasional conflict and the process of cantonement of the Melanesians, been altered, obliterated or realigned in response to missionary and official demands. Hienghène today is one of the larger centres of Melanesian population, but the pressure on land in the reserves is in places great, due to the resettlement of numbers of people on land to which they possess no traditional title. This had led to collective loss of memory regarding details of migrations and settlement in the area, and to a reticence to discuss matters which could bring to light almost forgotten claims and upset the precarious balance of land rights in the reserves.⁸

6

Swainson 1850; Vigors 1850:250, 254-5; Erskine 1853:356; du Bouzet to Min., 10 June 1855: ANOM, Carton 40, CG 1855; Laurent to Min., 13 Jan. 1857: ANOM, Carton 42; Forget to Min., 15 June 1850: Collection Margry; Montrouzier 1860:9; Rochas 1862:246.

7

Leconte 1847b:854; Vigors 1850:249; see below, pp. 90-3, 97-9.

8

Guiart 1966:112.

Despite this limitation, there is sufficient evidence in the records of contemporary observers to warrant the conclusion that the tribe of Bwarat at the time of the earliest known contacts with Europeans was settled mainly in the lower valleys of the Yengen and Tangen rivers, with outlying groups scattered along the coast to the north-west, and to the south-east towards the Tipinje river. Bwarat's main village (five or six huts in 1846)⁹ was several miles up the Yengen river at Kamedan,¹⁰ but he built a further residence at Kalegon, near the river's entrance, apparently in order to facilitate relations with European traders.¹¹ Some clans, including a number of Uveans, lived near the shore and in the shadow of the massive dolomitic outcrops which dominate this area. Others, said to be immigrants from elsewhere in New Caledonia, inhabited the area known as Ware.¹²

The population of the Yengen tribe was estimated in 1846 at 8,000; in 1850 at 2,000; in 1854 at 5,000 (including more than 600 warriors); in 1855 at 1,500; and in 1860 at 1,200.¹³ The

9

Leconte 1847b:850.

10

Ibid.; Erskine 1853:354, 355; Tardy de Montravel to Min., 8 July 1854: ANOM, Carton 40, CG 1854; Laurent to Min., 13 Jan. 1857: ANOM, Carton 42; O'Reilly 1953:29; Guiart 1966:113. In September 1859 the French destroyed the ancestral hill village of the Bwarat clan, which, they said, was situated amid nine large villages and more than 300 huts on the left bank of the Yengen river, about nine kilometres from its mouth ('ordre du jour du Gouverneur', 7 Sept. 1859: BO 1859-60: 167-8).

11

Erskine 1853:352.

12

Bérard 1854:97.

13

Leconte 1847b:822; Bérard 1854:97; Tardy de Montravel to Min., 8 July 1854: ANOM, Carton 40, CG 1854; du Bouzet to Min., 14 Feb. 1855b; *ibid.*, CG 1855; Vieillard et Deplanche 1863:21.

discrepancies between these figures result in part from the fact that some observers included in their estimates groups which either formed no part of the Yengen tribe, or whose connection with it was tenuous; and in part because all such figures were at best intelligent guesses. The latter two are probably more accurate, as they were based on something more than rumour or information received from the missionaries, whose acquaintance with the Yengen was far more limited than with the Puma. Despite the unreliability of such figures, it seems certain that the Melanesian population of Yengen decreased noticeably during the first thirty years of European contact. Mortality from disease was probably less severe there, however, than in other centres of intensive early contact, such as Balad, Pwebo, the Isle of Pines and Conception, where sickness and periodic epidemics caused great losses, especially amongst the Christians.¹⁴

RELATIONS between the Yengen and English sandalwood traders began in December 1843, during the period of the installation of the Marist mission at Balad. The Sydney-based vessels Portenia, Captain Richards, and Magnet were almost certainly the first European ships to anchor at Yengen, where they were enthusiastically received and quickly obtained good cargoes. The main objects of exchange were pieces of hoop iron, which the inhabitants laboriously sharpened and converted into tools.¹⁵

¹⁴

See above, pp. 51, 65-9, 84; see below, pp.206-7.

¹⁵

Lafferrière 1845:88, 108; Leconte 1847b:852.

The immediate attraction of Yengen for the traders was an abundance of cheap, easily accessible sandalwood. A further inducement was the presence of a united, cooperative population, and the security offered by a powerful chief.¹⁶ Bwarat and the Yengen were not slow to realize the advantages to be gained from their relationship with the traders, and they were enthusiastic participants in a mutually satisfactory business arrangement. The value and utility of iron implements were quickly recognized, and the price of sandalwood rose as the inhabitants gained experience and became more selective in their demands. By the time of Richards's second visit in 1845 the preferred items of commerce were iron and the small steel axes which soon became a favourite and lethal weapon of war.¹⁷ As the Yengen became more experienced and powerful through their dealings with the traders, so the demands made upon the latter became more exigent. Hoop iron had declined in value by 1846, while the fairly widespread distribution of tomahawks by the missionaries from their Balad base had diminished the purchasing power of that commodity. Despite missionary objections, Richards eventually gave Bwarat a musket and some ammunition, and

16

Towns to Silver, 15 Jan. 1847; Towns to Robinson, 23 Aug. 1848; Robert Towns, Papers, Items 56 & 57.

17

Leconte 1847b:853, 862; Shineberg 1967:74. The value which Melanesians placed on tomahawks was demonstrated in Leconte's account of the acquisition by Douarre of a large piece of land at Kalegon: 'Pour un petit coffre contenant une trentaine de petites haches, un vaste terrain appartenant au théa [chief] fut acquis' (Leconte 1847b:854).

shortly afterwards the chief tricked Richards's second-in-command into giving him a further firearm.¹⁸

The increase in offensive power which resulted from the acquisition of these weapons was said to have enabled Bwarat to mount a successful surprise attack on the enemy tribe of Tipinje, during which he killed his adversaries at will.¹⁹ This implication of the revolutionary impact of firearms on indigenous warfare in New Caledonia is misleading, since they were usually not possessed in sufficient numbers, nor maintained at a high enough state of efficiency to be effective against determined enemies.²⁰ The initial shock value of a few firearms might have been decisive against warriors with no previous experience of them, but the European weapon which had the greatest effect on Melanesian warfare was the tomahawk.²¹ The nature of this weapon was such that its adoption did not lead to basic changes in modes of waging war, as would have occurred had firearms been generally used. The possession of

18

Ibid., 853-4.

19

Ibid., 854.

20

Besson 1847:412; Leconte 1847a:771; Leconte, 'Notes sur la Nouvelle-Calédonie', 1847: ANOM, Carton 40, CG 1847-8; 'Motifs à l'appui de l'opinion émise par le commandant du Bouzet en faveur du choix de la Nouvelle-Calédonie comme siège d'une colonie pénale en sa qualité de membre de la commission de transportation en 1851', n.d.: Collection Margry; du Bouzet to Min., 25 Oct. 1857b: ANOM, Carton 42; Montrouzier 1860:5; Rochas 1862:209-10; Shineberg 1967:152-3, 170-4. Cf. Tardy de Montravel to Min., 8 July 1854: ANOM, Carton 40, CG 1854; du Bouzet to Min., 14 Feb. 1855a: ibid., CG 1855.

21

Leconte 1847b:862; du Bouzet to Min., 25 Oct. 1857b: ANOM, Carton 42; Vieillard et Deplanche 1863:52.

tomahawks by one side may have changed the traditional ratio of power between tribes and led to increased mortality in warfare, but the spread of the weapon tended eventually to cancel the advantage which tribes like Yengen and Kanala enjoyed through their earlier access to a plentiful supply.

Bwarat was said to have practised his skill with the musket upon lowly members of his tribe, and to have used the weapons to procure human flesh for his own consumption.²² Cannibalism undeniably occurred at Yengen, as in other tribes. Everywhere feasts were held with the bodies of slain enemies, or of people who had been condemned to death for crimes such as infringement of tabus or malevolent sorcery. More rarely and unnaturally, some powerful chiefs killed junior members of their own clans to satisfy their appetites for human flesh.²³ The missionaries were at first uncertain about the function and prevalence of cannibalism in the traditional society. Early in 1845 Bwarat was said to have promised to abandon cannibalism, after the missionary Viard had informed him, to his surprise, that it was an evil practice. In October 1845 Rougeyron stated that New Caledonians ate only their captives, and never killed for food alone.²⁴ By the beginning of the next year, however, he had changed his mind:

22

Besson 1847:412; Montrouzier 1860:8-9, fn.; Verguet 1861:63.

23

Besson 1847:352; Erskine 1853:354, 356, 360; Inglis 1854:64; Rochas 1862:302-3; Vieillard et Deplanche 1863:44-8; Patouillet 1872:135; Lambert 1900:178-9; Leenhardt 1930:95-6.

24

Viard to Supérieur-général, 27 Oct. 1845: APF 1846, 18: 416-7; Rougeyron to Supérieur-général, 1 Oct. 1845: APM/ONC, 26a; see also Bérard to Min., 1 Aug. 1846: ANM, BB4 1011.

... ce n'est pas toujours dans les guerres qu'ils se contentent de manger de la chair humaine. Manquent-ils de vivres pour régaler leurs amis, les chefs font tuer un de leurs sujets comme dans les pays civilisés on ferait tuer un poulet.

2.

This development in missionary opinion on the subject of cannibalism was apparently provoked by an increase in the practice which occurred at about this time. Bwarat was said to have encouraged his brother-in-law, Tindin, the young chief of the Mwelebeng tribe, to emulate him, increase the fear in which he was held, and supplement his diet in a time of scarcity by killing and eating members of his own tribe. Tindin and his friends became notorious in this regard.²⁶ The upsurge in cannibalism seems to have been connected, at least at Pwebo, with opposition to the Balad mission and persecution of Christians during a famine.²⁷ Bweon and the Puma participated in the revival, but took pains to hide the practice from the missionaries, whose teaching on the abhorrence with which it was regarded by the Christian God was apparently not ignored.²⁸ Tindin and most of his closest companions died quite early in the epidemic of 1846-7, and their fate was said by Rougeyron to

25

Rougeyron to Girard, 2 Jan. 1846: APM/ONC, 26a.

26

Leconte to Min., 31 Mar. 1847: ANOM, Carton 40, CG 1847-8; Leconte 1847b:848-50; Rougeyron, 'Abrégé de la vie de Hippolyte Bonou': AVNC.

27

Rougeyron to Supérieur-général, 14 Feb. 1847: APM/ONC, 26a.

28

Leconte 1847b:850, 855.

have been widely regarded as the punishment of God for their misdeeds.²⁹ However, the all too apparent fact that death during this epidemic was not confined to such obvious malefactors as Tindin eventually forced a different conclusion upon the people of Balad and Pwebo. They decided that they wanted no part of either the religion or the priests of a god whose justice was dispensed in such a destructive and arbitrary fashion.

According to Maurice Leenhardt, a chief possessed a right of life and death over members of his own clan and associated sub-clans provided he continued conscientiously to fulfil the role of the clan's 'great son': 'il a droit de vie et de mort sur les siens'.³⁰ A man whose son Bwarat had eaten was reported to have praised the chief's greatness, and seemed to bear no animosity towards him.³¹ Nevertheless, Leenhardt implied that wanton murder by a chief of his 'brothers', however lowly, for the sake of their flesh, was sacrilege, and would eventually destroy the chief's prestige and his right to his 'brothers'' allegiance. Leenhardt described cannibalism in the following terms:

29

Rougeyron to Supérieur-général, 14 Feb. 1847: APM/ONC, 26a.

30

Leenhardt 1930:98; 1935:131.

31

Leconte 1847b:851.

Le cannibalisme n'est pas une institution sociale, comme la culture, la pêche et la chasse et ne comporte aucun droit social que nous puissions noter. Ce n'est pas une coutume, mais un excès; il est fonction des appétits et de la force, et non du coutumier.

32

Thus it seems clear that wholesale slaughter by Bwarat of the people of his tribe would have ruined his prestige and the esteem in which he was held at Yengen. He was renowned amongst Europeans for his cannibalistic excesses, and yet neither his prestige nor his authority were ever questioned by the Yengen, who regarded him with affection and pride.³³ Tindin, on the other hand, was both feared and reviled for his excesses, which reflected both his lesser prestige and more extreme behaviour.³⁴ At Yengen such aberrant acts on the part of the chief were probably fairly rare, especially since opportunities to acquire human flesh 'legitimately', in war or by the execution of accused wrongdoers, were not unusual.³⁵

 32

Leenhardt 1930:96.

33

Douarre to Supérieur-général, 6 Jan. 1850: APM/ONC, 5b: Erskine 1853:356; Rougeyron to Supérieur-général, [Apr. 1858]: APO; Rochas 1862:246; Patouillet 1872:50-1; Garnier 1901:225.

34

Rougeyron to Colin, 14 Feb. 1847: APM/ONC, 26a; Rougeyron, 'Abrégé de la vie de Hippolyte Bonou': AVNC.

35

Cf. Montrouzier 1860: 35 ; Rochas 1862:242; Vieillard et Deplanche 1863:44-5, 50-1.

RELATIONS between Richards and the Balad missionaries were generally cordial, despite the somewhat unrealistic fear of the latter that he would encourage the settling of a Methodist missionary at Yengen.³⁶ On at least two occasions his vessel was chartered by the Marists, and it was he who carried news of the shipwreck of the Seine and some of the crew to Sydney in July 1846.³⁷ In May 1847 the English traders at Yengen were said to have accused the missionaries of being sorcerers who made other men die. The Marists considered this to be a major cause of the hostility of the Puma towards the mission.³⁸ The missionaries implied that the epidemic which began at Balad late in 1846 extended as far as Yengen: 'il est mort presque la moitié de la population dans les diverses tribus que nous pouvons connaître'.³⁹ Yengen, however, appears not to have suffered from the crop failure and famine which subsequently occurred at Balad. The traders may have cast blame on the missionaries for causing sickness in order to avert suspicion from themselves, but missionaries were generally more likely to be accused of sorcery, because of their connection with powerful alien supernatural forces,⁴⁰ and because the highest death rates from disease were in tribes in which missionaries had settled.

³⁶ Montrouzier to his brother [1846]: APM/Personal file (Montrouzier); Leconte 1847b:853-4; Shineberg 1967:74.

³⁷ Leconte 1847a:768; Person 1954:104, 105.

³⁸ Grange to Colin, 18 Sept. 1847: APF 1848, 20:175.

³⁹ Rougeyron to Colin, 14 Feb. 1847: APM/ONC, 26a; see also Grange to Colin, 18 Sept. 1847: APF 1848, 20:175.

⁴⁰ Shineberg 1967:175.

Richards appears to have given up his depot at Yengen and ended his personal participation in the New Caledonian trade between May and July 1847.⁴¹ It is unknown whether he abandoned the area because it was no longer safe to stay, or because the exhaustion of accessible supplies of sandalwood had rendered the trade uneconomic. The latter seems more likely, since Bwarat and the Yengen remained eager to attract European traders. By the end of 1847 the Sydney entrepreneur Robert Towns had filled the vacuum left by Richards, and acquired a sphere of influence on this part of the coastline.⁴² Despite the cooperation of Bwarat, Towns's Yengen ventures seem to have brought him little profit.⁴³ By the beginning of 1849 it was apparent that *bêche-de-mer* was a more promising item of commerce in this area than sandalwood, and that the main attraction of Yengen for Europeans was the protection offered by a powerful chief.⁴⁴ Towns remained anxious to use the goodwill of Bwarat, and for some years he continued to exhort his captains to enlist the chief's aid to form a *bêche-de-mer* fishery.⁴⁵ Nothing seems to have come of

41

Grange to Colin, 18 Sept. 1847: APF 1848, 20:175, 182; Shineberg 1967: Appendix I, 227, 231.

42

Towns to Cooper, 2 Mar. 1848: Robert Towns, Papers, Item 58.

43

Towns to Silver, 26 Dec. 1848: *ibid.*

44

Towns to Rule, 23 Jan. 1859: *ibid.*; Erskine 1853:361.

45

Towns to Rule, 23 Jan. 1849; Towns to Lewis, 27 Feb., 26 Apr., 15 Sept. 1849: Robert Towns, Papers, Item 58; Towns to Ross, 26 Aug. 1853: *ibid.*, Item 62.

this, but the area became a favourite haunt of semi-itinerant petty traders and coastal shippers, most of whom were English. They generally lived with the tribe and procured small amounts of bêche-de-mer and later coconut oil. They sometimes acted as resident agents for entrepreneurs such as Towns or James Paddon, and occasionally served as pilots or interpreters on visiting warships.⁴⁶ These men often had Melanesian wives, and all were dependent on the goodwill of the chief for their security and their labour requirements. Their principal function in the indigenous society was economic. They were tolerated and even welcomed because they were useful, and because their presence did not pose a threat to the validity of custom or the authority of the chiefs. This class of resident became more prevalent after annexation.

The frequent visits of English ships, especially traders, to Yengen afforded the people of this area an opportunity for travel. Some served as crew members on trading vessels, several went to New Zealand under the auspices of Bishop Selwyn of the Melanesian Mission,⁴⁷ and others, including

46

Towns to Cooper, 2 Mar. 1848; Towns to Hollis, 2 Mar. 1848; *ibid.*, Item 58; Moore 1850; Swainson 1850; Vigors 1850:243, 257; Febvrier des Pointes to Min., 19 Oct. 1853:ANOM, Carton 40, CG 18; Erskine 1853: 352, 361; Bérard 1854:100; du Bouzet to Min., 10 June 1855: ANOM, Carton 40, CG 1855; interrogations of Frederick Williams, 3 & 4 Sept. 1859: ANM, BB4 723.

47

Selwyn to his sons, 17 Oct. 1857: 'Letters from the Bishop of New Zealand and others', I, 386; Armstrong 1900:38.

Bwarat and his brothers, visited Sydney as guests of Towns.⁴⁸ The city itself, and the excellent treatment he received made a great impression on Bwarat. Years later he was reported to have said that in Sydney he first realized the weakness of his people in relation to Europeans:

"J'aimais beaucoup ces Anglais, ajouta-t-il, ils me payaient bien et me traitaient en chef; je consentis même un jour à les suivre sur la mer jusqu'à leur grand village de Sydney; c'est là que je compris le mieux notre faiblesse." 49

After this visit Bwarat was reputed to be anxious to civilize his tribe, and to have enforced for a time the abandonment of cannibalism.⁵⁰ He frequently requested both the Marists and the Melanesian Mission to send a missionary to Yengen, but seems to have favoured the latter after Selwyn's visits in September 1849 (in company with H.M.S. Havannah) and May 1850 (with H.M.S. Fly). The conjunction of British sea-power and English missionaries was certainly not lost on the chief, and it is perhaps significant that a Marist attempt to set up a

48

Towns to Cooper, 2 Mar. 1848: Robert Towns, Papers, Item 58; Goujon, 'Journal de l'île des Pins', 10 June 1849; Douarre to Supérieur-général, 6 Jan. 1850: APM/ONG, 5b; Vigors 1850:243, 256; Erskine 1853:359, 394.

49

Garnier 1901:312; see also Shineberg 1967:77-8.

50

Roudaire to Poupinel, 12 Oct. 1848: APM/ONG, 26a; Goujon, 'Journal de l'île des Pins', 10 June 1849; Vigors 1850:243; Erskine 1853:356; Montrouzier to his brother, 8 Mar. 1859: APM/Personal file (Montrouzier); cf. Montrouzier 1860:9, fn.

station at Yengen towards the end of 1849 ended in complete failure.⁵¹

In all, British naval vessels made four separate visits to Yengen between September 1849 and October 1851. In this time only one French warship stopped there, although others had visited Balad between 1843 and 1847. Almost continual contact with English traders, his trip to Sydney in 1848, and the visits of British men-of-war confirmed Bwarat's Anglophilia. The only Frenchmen with whom the Yengen had direct contact before 1850 were Marist missionaries, whose wealth and power could not compare with the British. Even after annexation the English connection was maintained by the traders resident there, and Bwarat's real or assumed preference for this nation was later to have serious repercussions for the chief and his tribe.

FROM 1843 until 1863 ambivalent relations existed between the people of Yengen and the Marists. On numerous occasions the Bwarat chiefs asked that a missionary be sent to their tribe, but every attempt to install one ended in failure. Contact with the Yengen people began almost as soon as the missionaries landed at Balad, since Puma and Yengen were linked by close

51

Erskine, 'Proceedings at the South Sea Islands' (Erskine to the Admiralty, 10 Oct. 1849): PRO, Adm. 1/5606; Erskine 1853:354, 356; Bérard 1854:98-9; Selwyn to his sons, 17 Oct. 1857: 'Letters from the Bishop of New Zealand and others', I, 384-5; Armstrong 1900:38.

political and familial ties, and relations between the two groups were frequent. The Marists quickly recognized that their influence would be limited as long as they remained at Balad, among a divided and insignificant tribe.⁵² At an early stage they seem to have contemplated the eventual transfer of their main base to Yengen,⁵³ and they were always anxious to secure a foothold there, because of the importance of the tribe and its chief. A further incentive was to counteract the potentially detrimental influence exercised by Englishmen, who were assumed to be hostile towards both France and Catholicism.⁵⁴ In 1859 Montrouzier summed up the attitudes and prejudices of more than fifteen years:

... voici en peu de mots ce que Yengen est dans l'histoire de la mission.- Tribu assez forte puisqu'elle compte au moins deux mille ames [sic] et n'est pas divisée, comme beaucoup d'autres, en petites cheferies [sic]. Centre d'où sont sortis la plupart des grands chefs des environs, muni d'un petit port assez bien fermé, long-temps fréquenté par les Anglais qui y puisaient de grands quantités de sandal et y deposaient en retour les fusils, d'ignobles maladies et une haine acharnée contre les Français et les Catholiques, Yengen devait naturellement être l'objet de notre attention.

5

52

Rougeyron to Procureur, 7 Dec. 1859: APO; Mathieu to Durand, 22 July 1861: ANOM, Carton 42.

53

Leconte to Min., 31 Mar. 1847: ANOM, Carton 40, CG 1847-8.

54

Montrouzier to his brother, [1846]: APM/Personal file (Montrouzier); Leconte 1847b:850, 854; Dégenine to Procureur, 14 July 1858: APO; Saisset to Min., 10 Aug. 1860: ANM, BB4 1036; Montrouzier 1860:8.

55

Montrouzier to his brother, 8 Mar. 1859: APM/Personal file (Montrouzier).

The first Catholic missionary visited Yengen in May 1845. Bwarat asked that a missionary be sent permanently, and presented his guest with a yam crop. Four months later, at a time of desperate need, the missionaries were allowed to harvest the yams, although the tribe had exhausted its own provisions.⁵⁶ Shortage of personnel prevented the installation of a missionary at Yengen before their expulsion from Balad and Pwebo in 1847, despite Bwarat's reiterated requests.⁵⁷ By that time the chief had come to be regarded as a threat to the security of the mission because of his warlike habits, his encouragement of cannibalism and his proud and independent nature.⁵⁸ Although his own enthusiasm for the missionaries seems to have waned,⁵⁹ towards the end of 1846 Bwarat provided them with a fine tract of land at Kalegon, and urged them to settle there. The Bwarat chiefs did not question the mission's right to the land for years, although it was only actually

56

Rougeyron to Colin, 1 Oct. 1845: APM/ONC, CG 1845-9; Viard to Colin, 27 Oct. 1845: APF 1846, 18:415-18.

57

Bérard to Min., 1 Aug. 1846: ANM, BB4 1011; Leconte 1847b: 854; Montrouzier to his brother, 8 Mar. 1859: APM/Personal file (Montrouzier).

58

Leconte 1847b:848, 849-51, 854.

59

Dousset 1970:67-8 interpreted Bwarat's disenchantment as a result of outrage that his own meticulous fulfilment of his contract in respect of the yam crop was not reciprocated with equally rich gifts once the mission's penury had been relieved. As at Balad, the missionaries' seeming miserliness caused them grave loss of prestige.

occupied briefly on two occasions.⁶⁰ The role played by the Yengen in the events of August 1847 is uncertain, but it seems likely that some anti-European sentiment existed, and they may have encouraged the hostility of the Puma. The Yengen chiefs certainly received a share of the plunder, but this may have resulted from the close kinship links between the Bwarat and the chiefs of Puma, rather than from the active involvement of the former in the attacks.⁶¹

Early in October 1849 the Marists made their first serious attempt to regain a foothold on the New Caledonian mainland. Yengen was one of two centres occupied, and the choice seemed logical: Bwarat had again requested a missionary; Father Gilbert Roudaire had recently visited the area, and was very impressed with the sincerity and goodwill of the chief;⁶² Bwarat's younger brother had been accommodated for some time at the Marist's station on the Isle of Pines, after being shipwrecked nearby on his return from Sydney, and he appeared likely to be a useful intermediary.⁶³

60

Leconte 1847b:854; Roudaire to Poupinel, 12 Oct. 1848: APM/ONC, 26a; Erskine, 'Proceedings at the South Sea Islands' (Erskine to Adm., 10 Oct. 1849): PRO, Adm. 1/5606; Erskine 1853:354; Bérard 1854:98; [Forestier], 'Propriétés et biens de la mission de la Nouvelle-Calédonie', 18 May 1860: APM/ONC, 3.

61

Leconte 1847b:869; Douarre to Conseil de la propagation de la foi à Paris, 11 Dec. 1849: APM/ONC, 5b; Montrouzier to his brother, 8 Mar. 1859: APM/Personal file (Montrouzier).

62

Goujon, 'Journal de l'île des Pins', 23 July, 19 Nov., 10 Dec. 1848; Roudaire to Poupinel, 12 Oct. 1848: APM/ONC, 26a; Douarre to Conseil de la propagation de la foi, 11 Dec. 1849: *ibid.*, 5b.

63

Goujon, 'Journal de l'île des Pins', 10 June 1849; Erskine 1853: 394, 398.

After a brief visit to Balad, Douarre and five companions set up a station on the mission property at Kalegon. A number of Puma who had remained faithful to the mission were also settled on a deserted part of the south-east coastline at Yate. Shortly before Douarre's departure for Yengen, Captain Erskine of H.M.S. Havannah met him at the Isle of Pines, and was struck by the low estimate in which the bishop held New Caledonians: 'it did not appear to me that the mission was embarking in the business in a spirit likely to ensure their success'. Douarre seemed obsessed by 'the reproach of cannibalism'.⁶⁴ The bishop later described his own reaction to Bwarat in the following terms:

Bouarat paraissait me désirer ardemment, et je fis mon sacrifice, quoiqu'avec répugnance. Je croyais, à la vérité, à la conversion pleine et entière de ce fameuse anthropophage, mais j'éprouvais pour sa personne, une répulsion dont je ne me rendais pas compte.

65

The attempt, a nightmarish experience for Douarre, was abandoned after little more than a month, because the missionaries became convinced that Bwarat and his brothers planned to murder them and plunder their property as soon as a substantial station developed.

64

Erskine 1853:395, 398.

65

Douarre to Conseil de la propagation de la foi, 11 Dec. 1849: APM/ONC, 5b.

66

The following discussion is based on Douarre to Conseil de la propagation de la foi, 11 Dec. 1849: APM/ONC, 5b; Douarre to Colin, 6 Jan. 1850: *ibid.*; Rougeyron, 'Biographie de R.P. Gagnière' 35-7: AVNC; see also Testard to Selwyn, 19 June 1858: ANOM, Carton 26, CG 1855-64.

Bwarat was prepared to allow the Marists to settle at Yengen, but to the missionaries his motives and those of his brothers seemed purely mercenary. The chiefs expected to receive a share of the missionaries' possessions, and hounded them for gifts. Bwarat regularly honoured his guests by presenting himself at their dwelling at meal times, but his generous condescension was not appreciated: mission provisions were scanty, and the Marists noted resentfully that the chief made no attempt to reciprocate their hospitality. The demands made by arrogant hosts, and their often insolent and provocative behaviour, distressed Douarre, but he was reduced to despair by the realization that the Yengen did not intend to modify their attitudes or way of life to satisfy missionary demands or spare Christian scruples. Yengen was a powerful tribe, with united, self-confident leaders, who had no reason to doubt the general efficacy of traditional methods and explanations. The chiefs were prepared to adapt potentially useful elements of a new culture to their own situation, but were unlikely to countenance wholesale inference with custom, or be able to enforce acceptance of such interference upon a majority of the group, unless it was clearly in their own or the group's interests to do so.

The Marists were certainly harassed and threatened during their stay at Yengen, and several overt acts of cannibalism were flaunted before them, but it is difficult to determine whether Douarre's fears for the ultimate safety of

the party were justified. He learned of the plot to kill them third-hand, via a Christian child from Balad and his friend, also not a member of the Yengen tribe. The plot seems rather unlikely, since Bwarat possessed quite sufficient intelligence and imagination to be able to anticipate the vengeance which would follow the molestation of missionaries. He had observed in Sydney the resources at the disposal of a European nation, and any expectation that his English friends would be able to protect him from reprisals by the French must have been counterbalanced by the memory of the punishment inflicted on the Puma and the Mwelebeng in 1847. The short-term advantages to be gained from the murder and pillage of missionaries were far outweighed by long-term disadvantages, as his Puma allies apparently realized, since they had requested the mission's return. Bwarat seemed amazed and distressed by the Marists' decision to abandon the station, and he always maintained his innocence of any design upon their lives.⁶⁷

In 1850 Captain Oliver of H.M.S. Fly was told another version of the story at several different places along the north-east coast. Bwarat's brother was said to have threatened, in jest, to eat a plump young lay brother. The missionaries took the threat seriously, and although Bwarat punished his erring brother and begged them to stay, their alarm was such that they

67

Goujon, 'Journal de l'île des Pins', 20 Jan. 1850; Bérard 1854:98.

left on the first possible occasion.⁶⁸

By September 1853, when New Caledonia was annexed by France, the Yengen and the Catholic missionaries were mutually hostile. Shortly after annexation another abortive attempt was made to settle a missionary at Yengen, again on the urgent request of the chief. He revoked his invitation before the priest could land, it was suspected on English advice. Bwarat claimed 'qu'il était désolé des mauvaises dispositions de son peuple, mais que les sujets ne voulaient absolument pas des missionnaires'.⁶⁹ The Marists denounced this as hypocrisy. as indeed it seemed, given their estimation of the extent of his authority. But the example of Pwebo and the Isle of Pines, where the hostility of influential tribesmen, especially the elders, hindered mission progress for years, despite the goodwill of powerful chiefs, supports Bwarat's case.⁷⁰ His personal opposition to the missionaries may well have been less rigid than that of more conservative members of the tribe, to whose opinion he, as 'great son', had to defer if the unity and integrity of the tribe was to be respected.

68

Oliver, 'The island of New Caledonia...' (encl. in Oliver to Adm., 25 Nov. 1856): PRO, FO 27/1161.

69

Montrouzier 1860:9.

70

Goujon, 'Journal de l'île des Pins', 7 July 1850, 1 Jan. 1851, 15 Sept. 1854; Rougeyron, 'Abrégé de la vie de Hippolyte Bonou': AVNC.

The rebuffs suffered at Yengen and fear of English influence affected the way in which some missionaries, especially Xavier Montrouzier, attempted after 1853 to influence official opinion regarding this tribe. They considered the Yengen to be anti-Catholic and Anglophile, and thus a threat to the interests of the mission and the colony:

... on vit clairement que le Chef de Yengen, ami aux Anglais, était hostile au Français, qu'on aurait en lui un défenseur redoutable de toutes les pratiques sauvages, un ennemi de la Civilisation.

71

Although the authorities did not always entirely agree with this view, it remained the basis of official policy towards Yengen until 1863.⁷²

IN May 1854 Captain Tardy de Montravel, imbued with mission fears about the potential danger posed to French domination by the Yengen, made a demonstration of power there with two war-

71

Montrouzier to his brother, 8 Mar. 1859: APM/Personal file (Montrouzier).

72

Tardy de Montravel to Min., 8 July 1854: ANOM, Carton 40, CG 1854; de Bouzet to Min., 10 June 1855: *ibid.*, CG 1855; du Bouzet to Min., 25 Nov. 1857b: ANOM, Carton 42; Saisset to Min., 14 Sept. 1859: ANM, BB4 773; Testard to Selwyn, 19 June 1858: ANOM, Carton 26, CG 1855-64; Durand to Min., 31 Dec. 1860, 12 Aug. 1861: *ibid.*; Min. to Commandant des Etablissements français de l'Océanie, 22 Nov. 1861 (draft): *ibid.*; Dégenine to Procureur, 14 July 1858; Rougeyron to Procureur, 1 Apr. 1863: APO; Montrouzier 1860:8.

ships. He aimed to squash any idea of resistance on the part of the chief, 'anéantir les espérances de quelques tribus du nord qui n'attendaient que le signal de Hienghen pour faire une démonstration hostile', and to counteract the supposedly hostile influence exercised by English traders. Aware of the futility of resistance, impressed by the French display of power, Bwarat accepted French sovereignty, and promised to forbid cannibalism and murder. He was guaranteed in return that Melanesian property rights would be respected, and that he would remain free to accept or reject Christianity as he wished.⁷³

Tardy de Montravel, like almost everyone else who met Bwarat, was impressed by his intelligence, his ability and his apparent sincerity: 'à une intelligence supérieure il joint un caractère plus droit qu'aucun autre sauvage et il tient surtout à honneur de ne jamais manquer à sa parole'.⁷⁴

73

Tardy de Montravel to Min., 15 Jan. 1854: ANM, BB4 701; 8 July 1854: ANOM, Carton 40, CG 1854.

74

Tardy de Montravel to Min., 8 July 1854: ANOM, Carton 40, CG 1854; see also Leconte 1847b:848; Erskine, 'Proceedings at the South Sea Islands' (Erskine to Adm., 10 Oct. 1849): PRO, Adm. 1/5606; Vigers 1850:243; Goujon, 'Journal de l'île des Pins', 15 Feb. 1850 ('Boirat est le kanak le plus intelligent et le plus politique mais aussi le plus ambitieux et le plus sanguinaire'); Laurent to Min., 13 Jan. 1857: ANOM, Carton 42, ('De tous les chefs calédoniens que j'ai rencontrés, Boirate est de beaucoup le plus intelligent'); du Bouzet to Min., 25 Nov. 1857b: *ibid.*; Guillain to Min., 10 Aug. 1863: ANOM, Carton 26, CG 1855-64.

The Frenchman naïvely assumed that a ceremony and a demonstration of power would suffice to bring about a revolution in morals and political allegiance at Yengen; that by his orders alone the French flag would replace human trophies as a symbol of prestige and authority; that 'Buarate est désormais franchement soumis'.⁷⁵ He underestimated Bwarat, however, by interpreting his acceptance of the immediate situation as indicative of a lasting change in attitude. In the absence of permanent surveillance, or at least of the threat of swift reprisals, the effect of any show of power by the French could only be transitory. Warships had stopped at Yengen before, and Bwarat had little reason to assume that the latest visit would be of more lasting significance than earlier ones, despite the impressive displays of pomp and military efficiency which accompanied it.

The concept of French sovereignty was totally beyond the experience of Bwarat and the Yengen, but they were probably prepared not to oppose the development of the colony, provided they were left alone to regulate the internal affairs of the tribe and their relations with other groups. A collision came early in 1856, when the Yengen united with several unpacified tribes against the partly Christian Tuo

75

Tardy de Montravel to Min., 8 July 1854: ANOM, Carton 40, CG 1854; 20 Dec. 1854: ANM, BB4 701.

and Mwelebeng.⁷⁶ So-called 'northern coalitions' provided persistent opposition to the mission and the colonial authorities in the north-east until 1862. Composition of the coalitions was neither coherent nor permanent, but the term is apt, implying as it does a temporary alliance, often of former adversaries, to meet a common threat. War continued intermittently until 1862, but membership of the coalitions fluctuated in response to specific grievances and the incidence of repressive measures taken by the administration and/or the Christians. They are perhaps best described as a series of loose alliances, consisting of a core of implacable enemies of the Tuo and Mwelebeng tribes and the mission, plus an assortment of individuals, clans and tribes induced to join the insurgents at different stages and for a variety of reasons. The Yengen participated until 1860, but leadership passed from the chiefs of this tribe after the exile of Bwarat in 1857. Subsequent resistance was mainly inspired by Kawa of Pwe, who had been active from the beginning. He was dubbed 'Napoleon', apparently by English traders. Governor Saisset

76

Testard to du Bouzet, 14 Jan. 1856 (encl. in du Bouzet to Min., 12 June 1856): ANOM, Carton 40, CG 1856; Rougeyron to Supérieur-général, [1856], 10 Oct. 1856: APM/ONC, 5d; Laurent to Min., 13 Jan. 1857: ANOM, Carton 42; J.M.Villard, 'Rapports sur les bienfaits et grâces reçus de la Très Sainte Vierge': APM/ONC, 2a.

referred to him early in 1860 as 'l'âme de ces projets [against the missions of the north and the French] dont les Hyenguènè sont les principaux instruments'.⁷⁷ He was elsewhere described as a minor chief who owed his influence to his renown as a warrior:

... un très petit chef...[qui] a acquis depuis quelque temps une certaine importance; il grandit tous les jours en attirant à lui les mécontents et les mauvais sujets des autres tribus. Il était à Hienghuen [in 1859] avec tout son monde; c'est son influence qui a déterminé et organisé la résistance.

78

Apart from the Yengen and the Pwe of Tuo and Konguma, it is uncertain which groups joined the alliances at various stages. The Tipinje, the coastal Tea Janu, the mountain people of Webia (Tea Janu) and Pambwa (Maluma), tribes of the north-west coast, members of the family of the Christian chief of Wagap, were all reported by European observers to have participated at different times.⁷⁹ It was stated in 1856 that the Mwelebeng were opposed by a coalition of fifteen

77

Saisset to Min., 1 Feb. 1860: ANM, BB4 723.

78

Forget to Min., 15 June 1860: Collection Margry; see also Mon., 14 May 1865; Garnier 1871:262-3.

79

Testard to Min., 23 Apr. 1858: ANOM, Carton 42; du Bouzet to Saisset, 25 Oct. 1858: ANOM, Carton 231; Vigouroux to Procureur, May 1859: APO; Conseil d'administration, 2 Jan. 1860: ANOM, Carton 42; Saisset to Min., 1 Feb. 1860: ANM, BB4 723; Mon., 23 Feb. 1862; Villard, 'Rapports sur les bienfaits et grâces': APM/ONC, 2a.

pagan tribes,⁸⁰ but the number was probably exaggerated. Over the whole period from 1856 to 1862 a tendency can be discerned for participation in the resistance to recede to more remote areas, as the intransigence of easily accessible coastal tribes moderated in the wake of military expeditions. Thus, Tipinje seems to have desisted from open hostility after an expedition in 1858, while Yengen and the rebel tribes to the north were subdued following a series of reverses during 1860.⁸¹ Kawa, whose main hamlets were inland, seems, at least before 1862, to have escaped the worst setbacks. His defiance persisted, and, as was suggested in the quotation above, his inland strongholds became a magnet for dissident spirits from surrounding tribes.⁸²

80

Rougeyron to Supérieur-général, [1856]: APM/ONC, 5d.

81

Testard to Min., 29 Aug. 1858: ANOM, Carton 42.

82

Again, after Kawa's submission to the French in 1864, the main centres of resistance receded even further inland. The standard bearer of the traditional cause became yet another fairly minor chief, Gondu, who had fought with Kawa against the French in 1862. His power and prestige increased rapidly with his successful defiance of the French, and an aggressive policy of territorial aggrandizement at the expense of established clans, which eventually carried him across the central watershed to the western slopes of the main range. His expansionism began in part as a result of French repression in the Wagap area, and dragged the colonial authorities into traditional conflicts, because of the dislocation which he caused to settlement patterns in an entire region. Gondu was finally tracked down and killed by a force of French soldiers and Melanesian auxiliaries in 1868, after his betrayal by a relative.

European opinion varied as to the danger posed by the coalitions. The missionaries initially saw a real threat to the survival of the missions of Tuo and Pwebo, and in the early stages contemplated abandonment of these stations and resettlement of their supporters in the south.⁸³ The failure of the pagan alliance to achieve victory in 1856 gave new heart to the missionaries and the Christians, and despite subsequent crises the survival of the mission stations of the north was only momentarily in doubt.

While Melanesian intransigence in the north-east provided a constant headache for the administration, and necessitated an unwelcome expenditure and dispersion of forces, it was generally believed that tribal divisions and diversity of language would prevent the formation of an opposing party large and unified enough to pose a permanent threat to the security of the colony:

Heureusement toutes ces tribus sont divisées par d'anciennes haines, et, parlant des langues tout à fait différentes, sont incapables de se réunir. Presque partout, et avant peu, nous aurons pour auxiliaires, contres les tribus voisines, celles dont nous occupons le territoire.

84

83

Rougeyron to Supérieur-général, [1856], 7 June, 10 Oct. 1856: APM/ONC, 5d.

84

Du Bouzet to Min., 14 Feb. 1855b: Carton 40, CG 1855; see also Tardy de Montravel to Min., 27 Apr. 1854: *ibid.*, CG 1854; du Bouzet to Min., 10 May 1857: ANOM, Carton 42; Min. to Durand, 18 Feb. 1860 (draft): ANOM, Carton 25; Durand to Min., 26 May 1860: ANOM, Carton 42; Forget to Min., 15 June 1860: Collection Margry.

Potentially dangerous opposition in the south had been suppressed with more limited forces than the administration commanded by 1860. The immediate danger to missionaries and settlers in the north was disturbing, but in practice it was felt to be only a matter of time before the resources of the colony would increase sufficiently to enable Melanesian resistance to be defeated in detail. This proved to be the case, although it was nearly sixty years before the last manifestation of open hostility was suppressed. On at least two occasions during the 1850's the rebels failed to press an early advantage because of dissension within the coalition, and most of Kawa's allies seemed to be insufficiently dedicated to his cause to persevere until final victory was achieved. Unanimity was difficult to attain, and tended to break down once limited objectives had been reached or setbacks suffered. A few non-Christian tribes were always prepared to fight against the coalitions, although on occasions they proved to be faint-hearted and unreliable allies.⁸⁵ In the long run, the cooperation of Melanesian auxiliaries was to prove probably the single most important factor in the French conquest of New Caledonia, and in the repression of almost every uprising from the first in 1856 to the last in 1917.

85

Rougeyron to Supérieur-général, [1856], 10 Oct. 1856: APM/ONG 5d; Vigouroux to Procureur, May 1859: APO; Saisset to Min., 1 Feb. 1860: ANM, BB4 723.

It was not until November 1857, after two years of intermittent warfare and frequent plots against Tuo, Mwelebeng and the mission, in all of which the Yengen played a leading role, that the administration actively intervened. Bwarat was arrested by Governor du Bouzet and subsequently exiled to Tahiti. He was replaced as chief by his brother Mweau, who was ordered to refer any inter-tribal disputes to the Governor for settlement. In return the Yengen were promised protection as long as they fulfilled their engagements and behaved well towards Europeans.⁸⁶ Du Bouzet was a humanitarian who wanted to act with justice towards New Caledonians, but was thwarted by the expanding need of the colony for land, and by the violence with which many Melanesians opposed mission influence and European settlement.⁸⁷ His main reason for the action taken at Yengen was to protect the Mwelebeng, to prevent a war which would impose a serious drain on the limited resources of the colony and hinder the work of the mission. He believed that Bwarat had repeatedly provoked disaffection with French rule in areas as far away as Balad and the Loyalty Islands.⁸⁸

86

'Décision du Gouverneur nommant le chef d'Hienguen', 17 Nov. 185 ANOM, Carton 69; du Bouzet to Min., 25 Nov. 1857b:ANOM, Carton 42.

87

Du Bouzet to Min., 16 Feb. 1855: ANM, BB4 723; 20 June 1855: ANOM Carton 40, CG 1855; du Bouzet to Le Bris, 4 Mar. 1856 (encl. in du Bouzet to Min., 12 June 1856): *ibid.*, CG 1856. Cf. du Bouzet to Min. 10 May 1857, 25 Nov. 1857a, 27 Feb. 1858: ANOM, Carton 42.

88

Du Bouzet to Min., 25 Nov. 1857b: ANOM, Carton 42. If true, this gives a distorted impression of the extent of Bwarat's influence, since strong traditional ties existed between Yengen and Balad and Yengen and the Loyalty Islands, especially Uvea. These were thus areas most likely to be susceptible to his influence.

From the point of view of the administration the governor's action was moderate and conciliatory, given Bwarat's reiterated defiance of French authority. To the Yengen, however the intervention of the government in a private quarrel between traditional enemies was an unjustifiable encroachment on the tribe's independence. The exile of their chief infuriated them, but failed to remind them of the military power at the government's disposal.⁸⁹ Shortly after Bwarat's arrest a small boat was pillaged at Konguma. Although the attackers were said to have been Bwarat's allies, the chiefs of Pwe and Tipinje, they were probably more interested in plunder than in a demonstration of scorn for French authority. They refused to pay reparations, and early in 1858 the recalcitrant tribes were punished. Several villages, said to belong to Kawa and his followers, were burned, canoes and gardens were destroyed and a number of Melanesians killed. The impact of this operation, and of another expedition sent at about the same time against the turbulent Bonde tribe, was considerable.⁹⁰ The Yengen, resentful, but shaken by the loss of their chief,

89

Testard to Min., 23 Apr. 1858: ANOM, Carton 42; Guillain to Min., 10 Aug. 1863: ANOM, Carton 26, CG 1855-64; Garnier 1901:390

Du Bouzet to Min., 5 Jan., 27 Feb. 1858: ANOM, Carton 42; Testard to Min., 23 Apr., 8, 21 June 1858: *ibid.*; Rougeyron to Supérieur-général, [April 1858]; Dégenine to Procureur, 14 July 1858: APO; du Bouzet to Min., 25 Aug. 1858b: ANM, BB4 723; du Bouzet to Saisset, 25 Oct. 1858: ANOM, Carton 231.

made repeated requests for a missionary and a military post.⁹¹ But without a large, permanent garrison in the area, the pacifying effect could only be short-lived. Open hostility did not reappear, however, until December 1858, when the chapel at Pwebo was burned, apparently on Mweau's orders.

Immediately after this incident Montrouzier started a mission station at Yengen, despite the misgivings of most of his colleagues.⁹² He and his companion were coldly received, were treated initially with indifference and later with open hostility. Only Bwarat's son, apparently in the hope that his father would be returned, behaved civilly towards them. In May 1859 a coalition led by Kawa and Mweau attacked the tribes of Tuo and Wagap, and threatened to fall upon the missionaries at Yengen. Since their safety could no longer be guaranteed, and the mission had been totally unsuccessful, it was abandoned. The reaction of the Yengen to the Marists had changed little since 1849, and they showed interest only in the pipes and tobacco which the missionaries used for trade.⁹³

91

Testard to Min., 23 Apr., 29 Aug. 1858: ANOM, Carton 42; du Bouzet to Min., 25 Aug. 1858a: *ibid.*; Rougeyron to Supérieur général, [April 1858]: APO; Montrouzier to his brother, 8 Mar. 1859: APM/Personal file (Montrouzier); Montrouzier to ? , 15 May 1859: APM/ONC, 26g.

92

Gagnière to Procureur, 2 Jan. 1859: APO; Montrouzier to his brother, 8 Mar. 1859: APM/Personal file (Montrouzier).

93

Montrouzier to his brother, 8 Mar. 1859: APM/Personal file (Montrouzier); Montrouzier to Procureur, 6 Mar., 5 June 1859; Vigoroux to Procureur, May 1859; Muraour to Procureur, 15 May 1859; Rougeyron to Procureur [c. August 1859]: APO; Montrouzier to ? , 15 May 1859: APM/ONC, 26g.

IN May 1859 a new Governor, Jean Saisset, arrived in New Caledonia, accompanied by reinforcements to the garrison of the colony. The latter included a company of twenty-six Tahitians, who were shortly to be used to good effect in the repression of New Caledonians.⁹⁴ Saisset's commission directed him to lessen expenditure, abandon the Balad post, occupy Kanala and concentrate the forces at his disposal in the pacified region of the south.⁹⁵ Yet within a month of his arrival he decided that the best way to carry out the intentions of his superiors was to lead two powerful expeditions against tribes thought to be hostile to French influence. The first was against the remnants of the defeated southern tribes, which men on the spot had considered to be of negligible importance for well over a year.⁹⁶ The second was against Yengen.

Saisset justified the latter expedition partly in terms of the long term hostility of the Yengen, and the open defiance which they had demonstrated since Bwarat's arrest towards both the captains of visiting warships and Montrouzier. His main

94

'Le chef Tariirii en Nouvelle-Calédonie', Mon., 28 June 1868.

95

Saisset to Testard, 15 Nov. 1858; Saisset to Min., 13 Feb. 1859: ANOM, Carton 42; Min. to Durand, 15 Mar. 1860 (draft): ANOM, Carton 25.

96

Du Bouzet to Saisset, 25 Oct. 1858: ANOM, Carton 231; Durand to Min., 26 May 1860: ANOM, Carton 42; [Foucher] 1890:72, 77.

reasons, however, seem to have been twofold. He feared that the imminent evacuation of the Balad post would be misinterpreted as a sign of weakness by the aggressive tribes of the vicinity, and he wanted to deal them a vigorous blow in order to show who was master; he intended to strike at English influence, which he believed to be detrimental both to French and Catholic interests.⁹⁷

The activities of English residents were viewed with deep suspicion by the colonial authorities in the period before 1862, when the hold of the government on the northern two-thirds of the colony was tenuous. Especially suspect were those based at Yengen, who were accused of fomenting anti-French sentiments, of gun-running and of excitation to revolt.⁹⁸ Despite the fears of the French, however, firearms and ammunition do not appear to have been extensively used as trade goods in New Caledonia, either during the sandalwood period or later. The demand for them was at times great, and they were certainly traded on occasions, or given as gifts to chiefs whose favour was sought.⁹⁹ But firearms were relatively

97

Saisset to Min., 14 Sept. 1859: ANM, BB4 773; 31 Dec. 1859: ANOM, Carton 42; Moniteur universel, 17 Dec. 1859.

98

Tardy de Montravel to Min., 15 Jan. 1854: ANM, BB4 701; du Bouzet to Saisset, 25 Oct. 1858: ANOM, Carton 231; Saisset to Min., 12 Sept. 1859, 1 Feb. 1860; Saisset to Durand, 1 Apr. 1860: ANM, BB4 723; Mon., 30 Oct., 6 Nov. 1859; Durand to Min., 26 May 1860: ANOM, Carton 42.

99

Leconte 1847b:853-4; Goujon, 'Journal de l'île des Pins', 28 Jan. 1859; Towns to Rule 23 Jan. 1849: Robert Towns, Papers, It 58; du Bouzet to Min., 14 Feb. 1855a: ANOM, Carton 40, CG 1855; Le Bris to Min., 7 Aug. 1856: ANOM, Carton 42; interrogation of Ouambat, 3 Sept. 1859: ANM, BB4 723.

expensive, which lessened their appeal to the trader. They also tended rapidly to become unserviceable, which increased the appeal of other goods, especially tomahawks, to Melanesians. After annexation the colonial government enforced regulations forbidding the provision of firearms or ammunition to Melanesians, and this put a virtual end to a traffic which had in any case generally been desultory.² Saisset was even more apprehensive about the arms' trade than his predecessors, and his edict of 16 June 1859 imposed severe penalties, which the authorities were not slow to invoke,³

The operations against Yengen lasted from 1-8 September 1859.⁴ A force of 170 participated, Tahitians, soldiers of the Marine Infantry and sailors, supported by the boats of the steam-sloop Styx, armed with artillery. Some Melanesian auxiliaries also seem to have taken part, including Gwa of

1

Du Bouzet to Min., 25 Oct. 1857b: ANOM, Carton 42; interrogation of Frederick Williams, 4 Sept. 1859: ANM, BB4 723; Rochas 1862: 185, 209; Shineberg 1967: ch.12.

2

The first such regulation was du Bouzet's 'arrêté interdisant le commerce des armes et des munitions de guerre', 22 Jan. 1855 ANOM, Carton 68; see also MacGillivray 1864a.

3

'Arrêté relatif au trafic des armes et des munitions de guerre 16 June 1859: BO 1859-60:122-6; Saisset to Min., 1 July 1859: ANOM, Carton 59; 12 Sept. 1859: ANM, BB4 723; Paddon to Loring, 15 Sept. 1859 (encl. in Adm. to F.O., 8 Dec. 1859): PRO, FO 27/1321; Mon., 5 Nov. 1859.

4

'Ordres du jour du Gouverneur pendant l'expédition d'Hienguène 1-9 Sept. 1859: BO 1859-60:162-70; Saisset to Min., 12 Sept. 18 ANM, BB4 723; 14 Sept. 1859: ANM, BB4 773.

Puma, a relative and ally of Bwarat. Aid offered by the missionaries was declined on the grounds that it might compromise their position with the Melanesians.⁵ During four separate operations most of the villages and gardens of the Yengen tribe were devastated, including those of Mweau near Kulnwe and Bwarat at Kalegon. The French penetrated inland along the Yengen river as far as a ford about six miles upstream, and destroyed the ancestral hill-village of the Bwarat clan at Kamedan, together with nine large villages and more than 300 huts. Similar devastation was carried out for some miles along the Tangen river.

Two Frenchmen, including a captain of Marine Infantry, were killed and twenty-five wounded, while the French claim forty New Caledonian lives. All the French and most of the Melanesian casualties occurred during the first two days, when heavy fighting took place as the Yengen and their allies tried desperately to save the coastal villages. After the destruction of Bwarat's village at Kalegon the defenders appeared to lose heart, and made little concerted attempt to prevent the loss of their hamlets and gardens, or to harass the French detachments. To the commander of the Styx such behaviour provided clear evidence of the internal fragmentation of New Caledonian tribes, and their lack of centralized political leadership:

5

De Broglie to ? , 28 Dec. 1859: APM/ONC, 4; cf. MacGillivray 1864b, who claimed that the Mwelebeng participated.

L'Individualisme est tout à fait dans les moeurs de ces sauvages; nous l'avions vu à Hienghuen. Les diverses fractions de cette tribu qui est une des plus puissantes de la Nouvelle-Calédonie n'ont combattu que pour la défense de leur propres villages.

Yet in the decade after annexation French policy towards Yengen was generally based on the premise that the tribe formed an integrated unit, solidly unified behind all-powerful chiefs, and as such posed at least a potential threat to French dominance.

Saisset's reports mentioned four separate occasions on which Europeans, or people supposed to be Europeans, were seen in the ranks of the enemy.⁷ Three other white men, two

6

Forget to Min., 15 June 1860: Collection Margry.

7

Saisset to Min., 9 Sept. 1859: ANM, BB4 773; 12 Sept. 1859: ANM BB4 723. After the expedition, Saisset passed an edict expelling from the colony on pain of death five Europeans 'vus avec l'ennemi' at Yengen ('décision du Gouverneur', 10 Sept. 1859: BO 1859-60:170-1). Of six Europeans said to have been resident at Yengen at the time of the expedition, only one was actually present (interrogation of William Smith, 3 Sept. 1859; 'procès-verbal d'information', 7 Sept. 1859: ANM, BB4 723). Three were shot and three named in the edict, together with two other men who had connections at Yengen. Of the eight, only one could possibly have been involved in the fighting, and he voluntarily surrendered about two hours after military operations got under way (interrogations, 3 & 4 Sept. 1859; 'procès-verbal d'information', 7 Sept. 1859: ANM, BB4 723; MacGillivray 1864b) MacGillivray asserted that 'the "white men" seen fighting among the Yengen natives, resolve themselves into a well known Albino'. His informant was an American, Charles Folger, said to have been present at the executions and to have written an account of the affair for Selwyn. Commodore Loring of the Royal Navy's Australian Station suggested on the basis of limited information that 'the justification of this execution rests on whether these Europeans did actually assist the natives against the French' (encl. in Adm. to F.O., 28 Dec. 1859: PRO, FO 27/1321). See also Loring to Adm., 10 Oct. 1859: *ibid.*

Englishmen and an American, were taken prisoner. One gave himself up soon after fighting began, and the other two were captured when they tried to enter Yengen bay in unwitting violation of a recent edict which forbade communication with the tribes of the region. The most serious French casualties were caused by gunshot wounds, although their enemies had only few muskets, which Saisset claimed were in the hands of renegade Europeans. He attributed the French deaths to them, although none of the four white men reported amongst the enemy was said to have had a firearm.⁸ The small number of firearms on the Melanesian side, and Saisset's contention that these were in European hands, contradict French assertions of uncontrolled gun-running in the area. Saisset's reactions are perhaps explained by events on and after 5 September. On that day the command post of the expedition appeared to be the particular target of attacks by groups said to contain a white man. Saisset assumed that they could only have been organized by Europeans, although in this he dangerously under-estimated Melanesian military expertise and tactical sense. In his orders of the day of 7 September Saisset declared: 'Le Gouverneur saura remplir les devoirs rigoureux qu'une pareille attitude d'étrangers méprisables lui impose. Il sera inflexible'. Accordingly, after a summary trial the three captured

8

'Ordre du jour', 9 Sept. 1859: BO 1859-60:169; cf. Moniteur universel, 17 Dec. 1859.

Europeans were shot on the beach, 'à l'effet de servir d'exemple aux Européens'. They were accused of taking an active part in the resistance to the French, and/or of providing the Yengen with firearms and ammunition. Two at least were unsavoury characters, and it is not unlikely that they had in the recent past helped Mweau procure an occasional musket, and given him small amounts of powder and shot. But the evidence against all three, which was recorded in detail and sent to Paris by Saisset in an attempt to justify his actions, was entirely circumstantial or based on hearsay. They seem to have been the victims of the governor's chagrin at the apparently personal attacks of 5 September, and of his determination to strike fear back into the hearts of itinerant traders throughout the colony.⁹ His orders of the day made no mention of the presence of Europeans in the Melanesian ranks before 7 September and the subsequent stress laid on their activities probably reflected his apprehension about the likely reaction in Paris to the executions. His reports of the incident, especially one written on 9 September, all showed an anxious awareness of possible repercussions; his justifications were elaborate, and the language used emotive:¹⁰

9

Cf. MacGillivray 1864b.

¹⁰ Villegeorges to Saisset, 20 June 1859; interrogations, 3 & 4 Sept. 1859: 'procès-verbal d'information', 7 Sept. 1859; 'procès-verbal d'inventaire des objets trouvés à bord d'une barque Anglaise le 3 septembre 1859'; verdict of the commission, 8 Sept 1859; 'décision ordonnant l'exécution de trois Européens à Hyenguène', 8 Sept. 1859; Saisset to Min., 12 Sept. 1859: ANM BB4 723; 'ordres du jour', 7 & 9 Sept. 1859: BO 1859-60:169-70; Denison to C.O., 11 Oct. 1858 (encl. in C.O. to F.O., 22 Dec. 1859): PRO, FO 27/1321.

J'attendrai respectueusement, Monsieur le Ministre, et je me soumettrai, sans observations, à toute décision qui interviendra, au sujet des sentiments qui m'ont guidé et de l'acte dont j'ai ordonné l'exécution. Je ne puis que vous affirmer: que le sentiment du devoir et le désir de bien servir l'Empéreur ont toujours été mon seul guide. 1

The harsh measures taken against their compatriots at Yengen thoroughly alarmed the English residents of New Caledonia. The most prominent, James Paddon, who had settled near Port-de-France, and had considerable financial interests in the colony, was so fearful for his personal safety that he fled to Australia in an open whale-boat. He publicized the affair in Sydney and made an official complaint,¹² but received little satisfaction from either the New South Wales or British governments. Although the latter investigated the matter, it agreed with the judgement of the governor of New South Wales. He suggested that the men shot were of bad character, and probably deserved their fate, while Paddon's flight was mainly a result of bad conscience.¹³ Despite the devious reaction of the French Foreign Office, the British did not press the matter, and no diplomatic incident ensued.¹⁴

11

Saisset to Min., 9 Sept. 1859: ANM, BB4 773.

12

Paddon to Loring, 15 Sept. 1859 (encl. in Adm. to F.O., 8 Dec. 1859): PRO, FO 27/1321.

13

Denison to C.O., 11 Oct. 1859 (encl. in C.O. to F.O., 22 Dec. 1859): PRO, FO 27/1321; F.O. Note, 'Colonial Office of Dec. 22/59', 24 Dec. 1859: PRO, FO 27/1305.

14

F.O. to Cowley, 30 Dec. 1859: PRO, FO 27/1287; Cowley to F.O. 19 Dec. 1859: PRO, FO 27/1305.

In the event, although Saisset's actions against the traders were criticized because of the possible embarrassment which might have resulted,¹⁵ he received official support on this issue. In December 1859 a version of the events at Yengen was published in the Moniteur universel, and was subsequently reprinted in at least two French journals. The report attempted to justify Saisset's behaviour by flagrant distortion of the record presented in his own despatches.¹⁶

Nonetheless, Saisset was relieved of his post in December 1859 primarily because of dissatisfaction over his conduct at Yengen.¹⁷ Most severe criticism was directed not at the executions, but at the expedition itself. The provocation given by the Yengen was thought not to warrant the harsh measures used. His actions had dangerously over-extended the limited resources of the colony, and risked a violent reaction which would cause the administration serious embarrassment:

15

Min. to Durand, 15 Mar. 1860 (draft): ANOM, Carton 25.

16

Moniteur universel, 17 Dec. 1859; Revue algérienne et coloniale Dec. 1859, I:394-7; Nouvelles annales de la marine et revue coloniale 1860, 23:98-100. The captured Europeans were depicted as 'le principal agent de l'insurrection' and 'ses complices... pris les armes à la main', obviously guilty and deserving the death penalty under martial law. Saisset's decision to execute them was said to be a painful one, taken as a last resort to save his beleaguered troops, who were locked in desperate combat with a numerous enemy. The latter, it was said, were led and organized by renegade Europeans, escaped convicts mostly, who abandoned their Melanesian allies after the execution of their companions, and thus gave victory to the French.

17 Cowley to F.O., 19 Dec. 1859:PRO, FO 27/1305; 'Note pour la Direction', 14 Mar. 1860: ANOM, Carton 168. Eleven years later Saisset achieved brief notoriety as a monarchist opponent of the Paris Commune. He earned from Marx's Russian editors the index entry 'reactionary monarchist' (Marx & Engels, Selected Works, Vol. I, Moscow 1951:466, 604).

Je n'ignore pas que ces populations étaient très excitées, qu'elles avaient des menaces et que l'évacuation même du poste de Balade par suite d'ordres antérieurs dont elles n'avaient point connaissance, pouvait être mal interprété par elles - Mais ces considérations ne pouvaient motiver un acte aussi grave que d'engager la lutte dans le Nord pendant que les affaires du Sud n'étaient point encore terminées... 18

By the time these opinions were expressed, the worst fears of the minister had been realized. The pagan tribes of the north-east, led by Kawa and including the Yengen, united early in December 1859 with the avowed intention to obliterate mission influence in the north, to kill the Christian chief Bonu and destroy the villages and gardens of the Mwelebeng in revenge for the arrest of Bwarat and the devastation wreaked at Yengen.¹⁹ Saisset's isolated expedition had completely the opposite effect to that anticipated, especially as he was unable to follow it up as planned.²⁰ Far from being intimidated, the hostile tribes reacted with fury, which, since the administration maintained no presence in the region, could only be directed against the Christians and the missionaries. The long-standing grievances of the pagans against the latter, whom they blamed for the repression at Yengen, only exacerbated their animosity.²¹

18

Min. to Durand, 15 Mar. 1860 (draft): ANOM, Carton 25.

19

Rougeyron to Procureur, 7 Dec. 1859: APO; Saisset to Min., 1 Feb. 1860: ANM, BB4 723.

20

Montrouzier to Procureur, 13 Sept. 1859: Rougeyron to Procureur, 27 Oct. 1859: APO; Saisset to Min., 31 Dec. 1859: ANOM, Carton 42.

21

Rougeyron to Procureur, 7 Dec. 1859; Montrouzier to Procureur, 7 Apr. 1860: APO; Durand to Min., 26 May 1860: ANOM, Carton 42; cf. Saisset, 'Note', [1861]: *ibid.*

The missionaries were conscious that association of the mission with the government's repressive measures would damage its reputation in most Melanesian eyes. They were careful to stress that the arrest of Bwarat and the expedition of 1859 were affairs of the administration, in which they played no part, and over which they had no control.²² Nevertheless, Bwarat and his tribe were well aware that an important reason for these measures was their overt hostility towards the Marists and the Christians of Tuo and Mwelebeng;²³ the missionaries were certainly not sorry to be rid of Bwarat, and only the violence of the pagan reaction caused them later to question the wisdom of Saisset's expedition.²⁴ In 1860 one of their number advised the government strongly against allowing Bwarat's return, and was primarily responsible for the abandonment of the idea.²⁵ In 1863, when Governor

22

Rougeyron to Supérieur-général, [April 1858]; Gagnière to Procureur, 2 Jan. 1859; Rougeyron to Procureur, [c.Aug.1859]: APO; Montrouzier to ? , 15 May 1859: APM/ONC, 26g.

23

Du Bouzet to Min., 25 Nov. 1857b: ANOM, Carton 42; Testard to Selwyn, 19 June 1858: ANOM, Carton 26, CG 1855-64; Saisset to Min., 14 Sept. 1859: ANM, BB4 773; Garnier 1901:313.

24

Dégenine to Procureur, 14 July 1858; Rougeyron to Procureur, 7 Dec. 1859; Montrouzier to Procureur, 7 Apr. 1860: APO.

25

Durand to Min., 31 Dec. 1860, 12 Aug. 1861: ANOM, Carton 26, CG 1855-64; Min. to Commandant des Etablissements français de l'Océanie, 22 Nov. 1861 (draft); Min. to Durand, 22 Nov. 1861 (draft): *ibid.*

Guillain determined to reinstate him a chief of his tribe, the missionaries were disturbed, and interpreted this action, rightly, as a blow directed at their influence.²⁶

MOMENTARILY in December 1859 it appeared that the Christians of Mwelebeng would succumb to the attacks of the pagan coalition, especially as Saisset was unable to spare forces for their defence. A number of warriors from Conception, authorized by the governor to bear firearms, relieved the position, and with added support from the Christian chief of Wagap, the Mwelebeng were able to prevent a pagan victory. Dissension within the coalition provided a respite, and enabled Father Jean Villard to organize the defences at Pwebo. War began again in March 1860, but Villard's well-drilled troops, armed with muskets, won decisive victory by the end of April. During May the Mwelebeng, led by Bonu, embarked on a series of expeditions against the enemy tribes, in which they won successive crushing victories over the Maluma, the Tea Janu and the Yengen. Forty-five pagans were said to have been killed to two on the Christian side.²⁷ This campaign

26

Rougeyron to Procureur, 1 Apr. 1863; Forestier to Procureur, 1 June 1863: APO; Rougeyron to Supérieur-général, 21 Oct. 1863: APM/ONC, 20.

27

Gagnière to Procureur, 3 Dec. 1859, 12 May 1860; Rougeyron to Procureur, 7 Dec. 1859; Gagnière to Rougeyron, 13 Dec. 1859; Vigouroux to Procureur, 23 Feb. 1860; Villard to Procureur, 13 May, 16 Aug. 1860: APO; Villard, 'Rapports sur les bienfaits et grâces': APM/ONC, 2a; Saisset to Min., 1 Feb. 1860: ANM, BB4 723.

established beyond question the dominance of the Mw. lebeng in the north-east. Only Kawa refused to submit. Everywhere pagan tribes requested missionaries, and meekly accepted catechists sent from Pwebo. Under the dual authority of Bonu and the missionaries, the Mwelebeng tribe operated as a virtual armed theocracy.²⁸

Following the expedition of 1859 Yengen remained under interdiction to all Europeans until 1863. Cut off from contacts with traders, shaken by military defeat, and anxious for Bwarat's return, they attempted to conciliate the colonial authorities and eventually sought a rapprochement with the mission. Mweau ignored mission teachings until his death in 1862, but Bwarat's son, Powe, who had for some time been better disposed towards the Marists, was baptized in that year. After the death of his uncle he became undisputed chief of the tribe, and the future success of the mission seemed likely.²⁹ By the end of 1862 there were 600 catechumens at Yengen.³⁰ Early that year Kawa had made a last effort to rid

28

Rougeyron to Procureur, 12 July 1860, 23 Oct. 1862; Forestier to Procureur, 7 Aug. 1861: APO; Forestier to Poupinel 4 Dec. 1862: APM/ONC, 19.

29

Montrouzier to his brother, 8 Mar. 1859: APM/Personal file (Montrouzier); Gagnière to Procureur, 13 Dec. 1859: APO; Mon., 16 Dec. 1860; Durand to Min., 31 Dec. 1860: ANOM, Carton 26, CC 1855-64; Forestier to Procureur, 7 Aug., 3 Sept. 1861, 5 Sept. 1862; Rougeyron to Procureur, 23 Oct. 1862; APO.

30

Rougeyron to Procureur, 2 Nov. 1862: APO.

the region of mission influence when he and part of the Wagap tribe fell upon and destroyed the mission at Tuo and then attacked the station at Wagap. The Mwelebeng, accompanied by the warriors of Yengen, went to the defence of the besieged missionaries. The administration swiftly despatched an expedition to relieve the situation and took severe reprisals, especially against the hostile portion of the Wagap tribe.³¹ Kawa's resistance was effectively broken, and in October 1864 he formally recognized French sovereignty and was pardoned by Governor Guillain. For similar reasons to Bwarat he subsequently became a staunch supporter of the colonial régime.³²

THE arrival of Governor Charles Guillain in June 1862 presaged a change in the role played by the Yengen in the colony, and a reversion by this tribe to an earlier attitude towards Christianity and the mission. Early in 1863 the interdiction on Yengen was raised, which enabled the resumption of trading relations with Europeans. Later that year Guillain allowed Bwarat to return from exile in Tahiti, in the expectation that

31

Thomassin to Procureur, 4 Feb. 1862; Rougeyron to Procureur, 1, 5, 23 Feb. 1862: APO; Mon., 23 Feb., 2 Mar. 1862; Analysis of a report from Durand to Min., 25 Feb. 1862: ANOM, Carton 42; 'Rapport du Commandant Hardy sur le champ de bataille à Wagap, 1862': APM/ONC, 15a.

32

Mon., 14 May, 30 July 1865; Garnier 1871:263-4.

he would prove to be an energetic and loyal supporter of the government:

Boarat est intelligent et doué de l'esprit de réflexion: il comprendra; et, en le rétablissant dans son ancienne position, comme chef de Hyenguène, j'aurai, j'en suis convaincu, dans cette localité ... un énergique et dévoué partisan du Gouvernement Colonial.

33

Perhaps influenced by his son, he was initially prepared to tolerate the missionaries. It was soon made clear to him, however, that this would incur official displeasure, a situation which he accepted readily enough, since his period in exile had inspired in him no love for the missionaries, whom he was encouraged to believe had engineered his banishment.³⁴ Although the administration's attitude towards Bwara had changed, the premise on which the attitude was based had not. The chief was still believed to be the absolute ruler of a large and powerful tribe. The conclusions drawn from this assumption were, however, very different. His influence, once seen as a threat to the colonial régime, was now regarded as an asset, as was his longstanding antagonism towards the Catholic missionaries. He was officially encouraged to consolidate his authority within the tribe and to extend it

33

Guillain to Min., 10 Aug. 1863: ANOM, Carton 26, CG 1855-64; see also de la Richerie to Guillain, 3 July 1863: *ibid.*; Rougeyron to Supérieur-général, 21 Oct. 1863: APM/ONC, 20.

34

Forestier to Procureur, 1 Aug., 11 Oct. 1863; Rougeyron to Procureur, 18 Aug. 1863, 24 Mar. 1864: APO.

to encompass neighbouring groups over which the Yengen chiefs had traditionally enjoyed at best a nominal suzerainty. By 1869 it was possible to say that 'l'autorité du chef de Hienguène s'étend presque d'une côte à l'autre',³⁵ a situation which had almost certainly not existed before contact. Once he understood what was expected of him ('pénétré de ce que le Chef de la colonie lui avait dit concernant la nécessité d garder soigneusement son autorité sur sa tribu'³⁶), Bwarat played to perfection his dual role of tribal autocrat and local government agent and intermediary. French observers, who had always praised his intelligence and ability, even when they decried his cannibalistic proclivities, his Anglophilia and his hostility towards the colonial régime, now spoke of him in admiring tones as the very model of chiefly excellence:

C'est le chef le plus réellement chef et le plus généreux que je connaisse; sa tribu, la plus riche et peut-être la plus guerrière de toutes celles de la Calédonie, obéit religieusement à ses ordres. 3

Bwarat remained a loyal and valued ally of the administration ('le chef le plus dévoué à l'Autorité française

35

Mon., 7 March 1869.

36

Mon., 3 Oct. 1864.

37

Patouillet 1872:51. See also Garnier 1901:225 ('il est du très-petit nombre des chefs actuels qui ont pu conserver de l'autorité sur leur sujets').

38

Mon., 29 Jan. 1865.

and rejected Christianity for the remainder of his life. He provided labourers for public works and participated in most of the campaigns of the 1860's, against both pagan tribes and the mission-dominated tribes of the north.³⁹ Apart from the opportunity to strike at traditional enemies, Bwarat and the Yengen received more tangible rewards for their cooperation. Very little land was alienated at Yengen during the 1860's; Bwarat was awarded a gold medal for his services to the French;⁴⁰ the tribe was exempt from corvées at Pwebo in 1868; its lands were not subject to reorganization along with those of most other tribes of the region in 1869-70.

Bwarat died in about 1875, and shortly afterwards a mission station was set up at Ware, on the northern shore of the bay. His son, Philippe Powe, who remained an apostate until his death in about 1889, adopted an attitude of neutrality towards the Marists.⁴¹ Bwarat's eventual success in coming to terms with the colonial régime was not emulated by at least two of his descendants. His grandson, Philippe Dv

39

Mon., 30 Oct. 1864, 24 Feb. 1867; Guillain to Min., 3 Sept. 1865: ANM, BB4 847; Courrier du Havre, 14 Jan. 1866: ANOM, Carton 26, CG 1865-9; Guillain to Min., 4 Dec. 1867: *ibid.*

40

'Etat de proposition pour des recompenses en faveur de deux chefs de tribus' (encl. in Guillain to Min., 31 Aug. 1864): ANOM, Carton 171. The medal is still in the possession of Bwarat's descendants.

41

Lemire 1878:159, 161; O'Reilly 1953:30.

shot himself in 1919 after being implicated in the 1917 revolt; his great-great-grandson, Roch, was deposed from the chieftainship shortly after World War II following unproven allegations of irregularities connected with the collection of the capitation tax. The tribe today is headed by a man who calls himself Bouarate, but who is only indirectly related to the Bwarat clan.⁴² Hienghène is one of the poorer districts on the east coast, and in some areas overcrowding and shortage of land cause severe problems and intra-tribal tensions. In 1870 the tribe was powerful, rich, officially well-regarded, and enjoyed considerable internal autonomy. Its chief had overcome setbacks to become one of the most influential Melanesians in the colony. This state of affairs resulted primarily from Bwarat's ability to appreciate where power in the colony lay after 1862, and to use the conflict of official and mission interests to his own and his tribe's advantage.⁴³ In the climate of renewed official support for the mission which prevailed after Guillain's departure in 1870, the peculiarly advantageous position of the Yengen disappeared. Bwarat's successors, less fortunate and

42

Guiart 1966:112; Guiart 1968: Notes; personal communication of Roch Bouarate, Hienghène, August 1969.

43

[Forestier], 'Notes sur la mission de la Nouvelle-Calédonie' [1865]: APM/ONC, 15b.

perhaps less flexible than he, were forced to accept European encroachment upon their lands and their independence. Attempted resistance was repressed, and as elsewhere in the colony, almost invariably ended in disaster for the Melanesians concerned.

CHAPTER IV

THE MISSION AND THE STATE

RELATIONS between French officialdom and the Marist mission in New Caledonia before 1870 fall into three distinct periods: 1843 - 1854; 1855 - June 1862; June 1862 - August 1870. During the first two stages relations were generally amicable; the third was remarkable for the flare-up of a peculiarly French feud between ultramontane clericalism and a rabid anticlericalism tinged with utopian socialist overtones. In the first period direct dealings between the missionaries and the agents of France involved mainly naval captains of the Pacific, New Zealand and Indo-China stations. In general these men were the willing auxiliaries of Catholic missionary endeavour, in both its national and its religious manifestations. Throughout the Pacific, where the influence of English Protestantism had spread widely since the arrival of the first representatives of the London Missionary Society in Tahiti in 1797, the fortunes of Catholicism were closely identified with the political ambitions of France. In the almost unevangelized areas of the Western Pacific the Marists were frequently regarded in naval circles as the vanguard of French penetration into a region where Britain had scarcely acquired a foothold.¹

1

Leconte, 'Notes sur la Nouvelle-Calédonie', 1847: ANOM, Carton 40, CG 1847-8; Commandant en chef de la Division navale des Côtes occidentales d'Amérique et de l'Océanie to commander of the Cornélie, 2 July 1861: ANM, BB4 789.

Throughout the nineteenth century, however, French government and society were riven by a bitter conflict between resurgent ultramontane Catholicism and the anti-clericalism which had stripped the church of much of its political power and many of its privileges during the revolutionary era.² Evangelistic fervour was strong in the French navy, although anti-clericalism was not without its disciples, as the Marists in New Caledonia were to discover to their cost. In the entire period to 1870, however, relations between the Marists and the captains of visiting French warships were generally of the utmost cordiality.³

Douarre and his companions were given transport to New Caledonia on naval vessels, and until 1846 the French flag flew above the mission dwelling at Balad. It was withdrawn in that year as a gesture of conciliation to the British, but naval goodwill towards the missionaries was not impaired. The

2

Spencer 1954: passim; Cobban 1965, II:82-8, 100-1, 124-6, 187-90, 223-4.

3

E.g., du Petit-Thouars to Laferrière, 20 Oct. 1843 (encl. in du Petit-Thouars to Min., 11 Nov. 1843): ANOM, Carton 40, CG 1843; Douarre to Min., 10 Jan. 1844: *ibid.*, CG 1844; Leconte 1847a:766-7; Rougeyron to Favre, 10 Oct. 1856: APM/ONC, 5d; de Broglie to ? , 28 Dec. 1859: APM/ONC, 4; Rougeyron to Procureur, 5 Aug. 1860: APO; Mer to Min., 4 Oct. 1860: ANOM, Carton 42; Trève to Forestier, 21 Sept. 1865: APM/ONC, 25; de Cintré to Forestier, 27 Feb. 1866: *ibid.*; Lambert to Procureur, 19 Jan. 1869: APO.

captain of a vessel about to undertake a cruise amongst the Pacific missions in 1847 was instructed: 'vous offrirez aide et protection aux missionnaires, autant que cela sera en votre pouvoir'.⁴ Four warships visited Balad between 1845 and 1847, and on two occasions brought relief to the missionaries in difficult or dangerous circumstances. Conversely, the help provided by Douarre in 1846 saved the shipwrecked crew of the Seine from disaster. Although Douarre's attempt in 1847 to induce the government in Paris to reassert French sovereignty over New Caledonia proved unsuccessful, it was at least in part as a result of missionary fears about the possibility of British annexation that the decision was taken in 1853 to annex the archipelago in the name of France.⁵

The attitude of the Marists towards annexation by France was somewhat ambiguous. Given a choice, they would have preferred that European intervention should not occur, and that the Melanesians be kept from all contact with non-missionary Europeans, at least while they remained at their present stage of development: 'si les gouvernements nous laissent encore la

4

Instructions enclosed in Gouverneur des Etablissements français de l'Océanie to Min., 24 Nov. 1847: ANOM, Carton 40, CG 1847.

5

Gouverneur des Etablissements français de l'Océanie to Min., 11 Mar. 1851 (quoting extracts from a letter from Douarre): ANOM, Carton 40, CG 1849-52; Commissaire de la République aux îles de la Société to Min., 10 Oct. 1851 (reporting the opinions of the missionary Gilbert Roudaire): *ibid.*; Directeur des Colonies, Report, December 1852 (draft): *ibid.*

paix quelques années un grand élan sera donné en N. Calédonie'.⁶
 Faced with the possibility of a British takeover, however, they wholeheartedly welcomed their compatriots, since French annexation removed the spectre of the ruin of their work which they feared would follow the imposition of British control and a consequent influx of Protestant missionaries.⁷ It also made possible the extension of their activities under conditions of unaccustomed security.

On the other hand, the aims and intentions of the naval officers who effected annexation were in some respects irreconcilable with those of the missionaries. The latter were mainly concerned with the well-being, as they saw it, of the indigenous people. In 1850 Douarre, in the belief that annexation by Britain was imminent, pledged his mission to the Melanesian cause:

Sans faire de l'opposition au gouvernement Anglais ce qui ne conviendrait ni à notre habit ni à nos intérêts... nous serons les protecteurs et les défenseurs de ces pauvres sauvages, comme nous l'aurions été également dans le cas où le Gouvernement français eût maintenu sa prise de possession.

8

6

Gagnière to Supérieur-général, 18 Sept. 1853: APM/ONC, 21.

7

Cf. the attitudes of British missionaries in similar circumstances. They tended to be isolationist and anti-annexation, until the threat of a French takeover and its presumed concomitant, the promotion of Catholicism, caused them to demand some form of British protectorate or even outright annexation (Gunson 1964-5: 300-2).

⁸Douarre to Supérieur-général, 2 July 1850: APM/ONC, 5b; see also Montrouzier to his brother, 14 Oct. 1853: APM/Personal file (Montrouzier).

The missionaries wished to create a situation whereby Melanesians would accept certain aspects of European civilization, especially the Christian religion, and yet remain beyond the influence of European vice. In the eyes of most of the Marists, an agglomeration of Europeans was notable mainly for the prevalence of vice, and the influence of sailors, soldiers, colonists and traders was regarded as detrimental to the interests and future of the mission. While Montrouzier was the most vocal exponent of this view, all the missionaries shared it to some extent:

...je suis porté à conclure que si la présence de nos navires est avantageuse sous un rapport en ce qu'ils donnent un peu de crédit aux missionnaires aux yeux des naturels, d'un autre côté elle leur est fort nuisible par la mauvaise conduite et le mauvais exemple qu'ils donnaient.

9

The naval officers, however, had to implement annexation, crush any sign of recalcitrance as attempted revolt against legally constituted authority, and create conditions of security in

 9

Goujon, 'Journal de l'île des Pins', 3 Nov. 1850; see also Douarre to Poupinel, 30 Dec. 1845: APM/ONC, 5a; Montrouzier to évêque de Montpellier, 4 Nov. 1855: *ibid.*, 26d; Montrouzier to his brother, 10 Nov. 1855: APM/Personal file (Montrouzier); Montrouzier to Procureur, 7 Apr. 1860; Rougeyron to Procureur, 22 Nov. 1861, 23 Feb. 1862: APO.

which the new colony could be developed as rapidly as possible, in order to recompense France for the inevitable early expense of obtaining it.¹⁰

Whatever the potential for future conflict of interests, the missionaries initially gave full cooperation to the naval commanders, and simultaneously attempted to turn the new dispensation to their own advantage. They mediated with the chiefs of Puma, Mwelebeng and the Isle of Pines to obtain recognition of French sovereignty; they smoothed over misunderstandings; they used their influence to discourage violent opposition by Melanesians, and when a collision occurred they persuaded the French not to take harsh reprisals. At the same time the missionaries sought legal titles to the lands they occupied,¹¹ and encouraged the adoption of legislation like the Puma and Mwelebeng codes of law, which embodied many of the reforms they considered necessary. They hoped the codes would reinforce the authority of well-disposed chiefs, and safeguard the position of the Christians at Balad and Pwebo. Missionary efforts on behalf of France won

¹⁰

Min. to Febvrier des Pointes, 28 Feb. 1854 (draft): ANOM, Carton 40, CG 1854; Tardy de Montravel to Min., 8 July 1854: *ibid.*

¹¹

[Forestier], 'Propriétés et biens de la mission', 18 May 1860: APM/ONC, 3; du Bouzet to Min., 20 June 1855: ANOM, Carton 40, CG 1855.

warm praise from Febvrier des Pointes and Tardy de Montravel, the men who had most to do with the foundation of the colony. They considered that mission influence at Balad, Pwebo and the Pines played a vital role in modifying the savagery of the inhabitants and disposing them to accept French domination peacefully.¹² The official instructions given to du Bouzet, the first governor of the colony, echoed these sentiments:

M^r. de Montravel se loue d'une manière toute particulière de la franche coopération qu'il a trouvée chez les Pères de la mission, et il fait ressortir l'utilité du secours qu'il en a reçu dans les relations avec les indigènes comme pour le bien être des équipages. J'invite cet officier à les en remercier de ma part. Je n'ai pas besoin de vous recommander de ne négliger de votre côté, aucune occasion pour leur témoigner toute la reconnaissance du Gouvernement.

13

Early in 1854, however, the missionaries had a foretaste of vexations which would recur as a result of the contradictory goals of the mission and the colonial administration. Tardy de Montravel refused to intervene in a minor intra-tribal squabble in support of a Christian chief. He stressed that the administration's guarantee of protection in return for loyalty and good behaviour could only be invoked in exceptional circumstances, such as open revolt or a complete breakdown of

12

Febvrier des Pointes to Min., 5 Dec. 1853: ANOM, Carton 40, CG 1853; Tardy de Montravel to Min., 27 Apr. 1854: *ibid.*, CG 1854; Rougeyron was awarded the Légion d' Honneur on des Pointes's recommendation.

¹³ Min. to du Bouzet, 24 Aug. 1854 (draft): ANOM, Carton 40, CG 1854; see also Min. to Tardy de Montravel, 24 Aug. 1854 (draft): *ibid.*

authority. He was determined not to set a precedent which might lead to frequent demands for official intervention in petty traditional quarrels, and which would expose the administration to accusations of partisanship.¹⁴

A key feature of the colonial régime in New Caledonia in the period to 1870 was the refusal or inability of the home government to provide the men on the spot with adequate resources to meet the demands of a developing colony.¹⁵ This affected almost every action taken by the administration, and its relations with every sector of the population. Before 1862 shortage of forces and funds led the authorities to value loyalty in Melanesians above all else, and they were prepared to reward it and to buy it at the expense of the mission. It was from the beginning an official maxim that imposition of Christianity was not a necessary consequence of annexation. Peaceful rejection of the mission was not punished, provided Melanesians gave active support and complete obedience to the administration, and did not use violence. Tardy de Montravel described Bwarat's apparent change in attitude once he had been reassured on that score:

...quand ... je lui eus affirmé que toute
liberté lui restait de continuer à vivre dans
l'idolâtrie ou d'embrasser le catholicisme...
il s'opéra en lui une réaction complète.

16

14

Correspondence between Tardy de Montravel and Montrouzier, 11 Mar. 1854: ANOM, Carton 67.

15 See Appendix II.

16 Tardy de Montravel to Min., 8 July 1854: ANOM, Carton 40, CG 1854.

The Puma learned early, and after Bweon's deposition remained obedient allies of the government, although they had rejected the mission. In the south, where the ability of the administration to repress resistance became most immediately obvious, tribes such as Manongwe and Kanala also supported the authorities and provided auxiliaries in wars against hostile tribes, whilst ignoring the mission.¹⁷ But the Yengen, despite de Montravel's promise, failed to appreciate the lesson until after 1862, because their previous experience seemed to indicate that the missionaries and the Mwelebeng chiefs were at least as powerful as the government, and that the interests of mission, Mwelebeng and administration were identical.

Limited resources, however, was also a factor which encouraged official goodwill towards the mission before 1862. During this period the administration, by necessity and under orders from Paris, concentrated on the southern third of the colony, which was virtually pacified by 1860, with the aid of Melanesian auxiliaries, both Christian and pagan.¹⁸ Apart from

¹⁷ On Kanala, see Le Bris to Min., 7 Aug. 1856: ANOM, Carton 42; Durand to Min., 30 June 1861: *ibid.*; cf. Montrouzier to his family, 15 Dec. 1859: AMO, 1:419. On the Manongwe, see E. Bourgey, 'Mort du chef Watton': Mon., 27 Jan. 1867; A. Mathieu, 'Aperçu historique sur la tribu des Houassios ou des Manongwês': Mon., 12 Jan. 1868; cf. Lambert to Procureur, 4 Feb. 1867: APO.

¹⁸

Saisset to Testard, 15 Nov. 1858; Saisset to Min., 13 Feb., 31 Dec. 1859; Saisset to Durand, 1 Apr. 1860: ANOM, Carton 42; Durand to Min., 20 July 1859, 26 May 1860: *ibid.*; Saisset to Min., 1 Feb. 1860: ANM, BB4 723; Min. to Durand, 15 Mar. 1860 (draft): ANOM, Carton 25.

the small Balad post, abandoned in 1859, and a larger one at Wagap, which was not created until early in 1862, direct government influence was only felt in the north when punitive expeditions were sent against recalcitrant tribes. Without permanent surveillance, military repression failed to inculcate lasting respect among the more belligerent Melanesians.¹⁹ Throughout much of the north the main continuing pro-colonial influence was that of the mission and the partly Christian Mwelebeng tribe, and Melanesian hostility in this region tended to be directed against the missionaries and their supporters. The administration was generally well-disposed towards the mission before 1862, not least because it was believed to have an important civilizing and pacifying influence, especially in areas where official action was limited by the shortage of men and resources.²⁰ Where possible the authorities despatched expeditions to punish the rebellious tribes of the north. But in practice during this period the missionaries relied very much on their own resources and those of their supporters, and government action tended to be retaliatory rather than preventative.²¹

¹⁹Durand to Min., 26 May 1860: ANOM, Carton 42; Mon., 7 Oct. 1866.

²⁰E.g., du Bouzet to Saisset, 25 Oct. 1858: ANOM, Carton 231.

²¹E.g., see above pp. 112-34 passim.

Of the five men²² who handled the internal administration of New Caledonia between 1855 and 1862 only Saisset had other than cordial relations with the Marists. Du Bouzet warmly acknowledged the services rendered to the French cause by the inhabitants of Conception during 1856 and 1857, and regretted that missionary influence was not more extensive.²³ He never wavered in his belief that the mission was an indispensable ally of the government, and that the civilization of the Melanesians and their peaceful acceptance of French domination would be achieved more easily where missionary influence was felt:

... ces dignes prêtres sont les auxiliaires les plus utiles que nous puissions employer pour habituer les indigènes à se soumettre à notre autorité et les civiliser graduellement, ils n'ont cessé jusqu'à ce jour de nous rendre de grands services.

24

The missionaries, in their turn, were equally appreciative of the goodwill of the administration and its efforts on their

22

See Appendix I.

23

Du Bouzet to Min., 14 Feb., 10 June, 7 July 1855: ANOM, Carton 40, CG 1855; du Bouzet to Rougeyron, 27 Apr. 1855: APM/ONC, 24; du Bouzet to Min., 26 Sept., 31 Dec. 1857: ANOM, Carton 42; du Bouzet to Saisset, 25 Oct. 1858: ANOM, Carton 231. See also Le Bris to Min., 28 Oct. 1856: ANOM, Carton 40, CG 1856; Testard to Rougeyron, 10 Jan. 1857, 25 Jan., 26 Feb. 1858: APM/ONC, 1a; de Cintré to Min., 9 Jan. 1861: ANM, BB4 1036.

24

Du Bouzet to Min., 27 Mar. 1855: ANOM, Carton 40, CG 1855.

behalf: 'Nous sommes toujours bien avec tous ces messieurs du gouvernement, ils nous rendent de vrais services et réciproquement'.²⁵

Nonetheless, while each side favoured cooperation with the other, they could only work in complete harmony together as long as their interests were complementary, or at least not opposed. Yet their priorities usually differed. Rougeyron was prevailed upon not to abandon Conception when it was attacked by hostile tribes. Cooperation with the government on this occasion meant the unwilling abandonment by the missionaries of earlier scruples against answering force with force. The administration's main concern was less the survival of Christianity in the area than the provision of an outpost for the defence of Port-de-France.²⁶ In the very early days of the colony, however, the authorities were themselves generally reluctant to use force against Melanesians except in the face of extreme provocation and in advantageous circumstances, since they feared that to do so would risk a dangerous over-extension of their resources, and might aggravate rather than discourage hostility.²⁷ Thus du Bouzet refused to try to impose

25

Rougeyron to Supérieur-général, 8 Aug. 1855: APM/ONC, 5d; see also Rougeyron to Supérieur-général, 29 Oct. 1855, [1856], 7 June 1856: *ibid.*; Rougeyron to Supérieur-général, [April 1858]: APO. 26

Le Bris to Min., 28 Oct. 1856: ANOM, Carton 40, CG 1856; du Bouzet to Min., 31 Dec. 1857: ANOM, Carton 42; Testard to Rougeyron, (various letters, mostly undated): APM/ONC, 1a; Rougeyron to Procureur, 15 June 1860: APO.

²⁷Du Bouzet to Min., 14 Feb., 10 June 1855: ANOM, Carton 40, CG 1855; Laurent to Min., 13 Jan. 1857: ANOM, Carton 42; Durand to Min., 26 May 1860: *ibid.*; de Cintré to Min., 9 Jan. 1861: ANM, BB4 1036.

the code of laws upon the uncooperative majority of the Mwelebeng tribe at a time when he could not provide a garrison in the area, and caused Rougeyron to complain that the government did nothing to reinforce the authority of well-disposed chiefs:

... mais ce code, ayant malheureusement cessé d'être soutenu, est tombé en dessuétude [sic]; et ainsi les sauvages sont retombés dans leur premier état. Ces chefs [of Puma and Mwelebeng] quoique bien disposés, réduits à leurs seules forces, ne peuvent rien faire pour le bien de leur pays: Nous-mêmes, sans secours, ne pourrons agir pendant long-temps que faiblement et sur une petite Etendue parmi ces hordes indisciplinées qui ne se plaisent que dans la guerre, le désordre et la barbarie.

28

Thus, despite mutual goodwill, missionaries and administrators consistently sought to use each other to their own advantage, and even in the first flush of mutual enthusiasm frustration and irritation sometimes resulted.

Under the governorship of Saisset this tendency became more pronounced. To some extent mission/government relations during this period previewed the clashes and conflicts of interest which became of major importance under Guillain, and the question of ecclesiastical jurisdiction was raised, at least implicitly. Saisset was an autocratic, energetic man,

28

Rougeyron to Min., 2 Aug. 1855: ANOM, Carton 40, CG 1855. The letter bears the following marginal annotation: 'Est-il admissible que M. du Bouzet ait laissé rétrograder la civilisation?'

who viewed setbacks with impatience and brooked no interference with his authority.²⁹ The Marists were at first impressed by his energy and excited by his vision, but were disillusioned by the non-fulfilment of many of his promises and the failure of his more grandiose plans. It became apparent that the missionaries would only remain in official favour as long as they acted in accordance with the governor's view of their role in the colony, but his reiterated demands that they extend the sphere of their activities placed severe strains on the resources of the mission. The Marists were resentful that they could not obtain permanent titles for all the land to which they laid claim, and they complained that Saisset's repressive measures in the north served only to exacerbate Melanesian hostility and worsen the situation of the missions in this region.³⁰

Influenced by the poor relations which he had experienced with the Tahitian mission, Saisset arrived in New Caledonia suspicious of missionary pretensions, and determined to make them conform to the administrative framework of the colony. The instructions which he sent from Tahiti several months before leaving for New Caledonia expressed this attitude:

29

Saisset to Min., 5 June 1859: ANM, BB4 723; Conseil d'administration, 2 Jan. 1860: ANOM, Carton 42; Rougeyron to Procureur, 29 July, 2, 22 Sept. 1859: APO.

30

Frémont to Procureur, 30 May 1859; Montrouzier to Procureur, 5 June, 17 Aug., 17 Oct. 1859; Rougeyron to Procureur, 8 June, 29 July, 22 Sept. 1859, [1859], 15 June 1860: APO .

En règle générale, vous devez aider nos missionnaires autant que possible, mais ne subordonner en aucune façon les mouvements militaires à leurs demandes.... Nous devons nous efforcer d' entrer dans la phase de la substitution du pouvoir de l'Empereur à celui ou à l'influence de la mission, tout en marchant d'un commun accord, cette dernière pour évangiliser [sic], nous pour dominer.

31

He consistently stressed the value of the work of the mission in civilizing Melanesians, however, and regarded its influence as an important counter to English and Protestant influence, especially in the Loyalty Islands.³² His dealings with the church seem to have been less acrimonious in New Caledonia than in Tahiti, but a subsequent attempt by an apologist of the governor to deny the existence of conflict is not confirmed by the evidence of missionary letters.³³ Throughout this period, however, the mission enjoyed better relations with Saisset than with some of his subordinates. At Kanala and the Isle of Pines friction developed between the missionaries and the commandants of the local garrisons, while at Port-de-France anti-mission feeling was said to be strong amongst some members

31

Saisset to Testard, 15 Nov. 1858: ANOM, Carton 42. See also Rougeyron to Procureur, 23 Aug. 1859: APO.

32

Saisset to Min., 5 June 1859: ANM, BB4 723; Saisset to Min., 31 May, 20 Aug. 1859: ANOM, Carton 42; Rougeyron to Procureur, 22 July 1859; Montrouzier to Procureur, 17 Aug. 1859: APO; Saisset to Durand, 1 Apr. 1860: ANOM, Carton 42 ('... les missionnaires... sont bien méritants par tous leurs efforts pour moraliser la population indigène'); Saisset to Min., 10 Aug. 1860: ANM, BB4 1036.

33

De Broglie to ? , 28 Dec. 1859: APM/ONC, 4; de Broglie to [Supérieur-général], 12 Jan. 1860: *ibid.*, 1b.

of Saisset's staff. Furthermore, many settlers and residents of Port-de-France resented the apparently favoured treatment which the mission had received in regard to land grants, especially the large, fertile and well-cited concessions at Conception and Saint-Louis, which it held under fairly stringent conditions in return for help in the wars of 1856 and 1857.³⁴

Disquiet in Paris over the relationship between the local authorities and the mission caused the following instructions to be sent to Saisset's successor, Lieutenant Colonel Jean Durand, early in 1861. They seem to have been motivated more by self-interest than by religious fervour, but they reflected a firm belief that missionary influence should not be restricted to a purely spiritual sphere:

Il importe ... de seconder par tous les moyens possibles l'oeuvre des missionnaires, de manière à ce qu'elle puisse nous coaliser les tribus qui nous sont encore hostiles.

34

Montrouzier to Procureur, 21 Sept., 7 Oct. 1859, 1 Mar., 7 Apr., 22 May 1860; Rougeyron to Procureur, 15 June 1860: APO; de Broglie to [Supérieur-général], 12 Jan. 1860: APM/ONC, 1b; Forget to Min., 15 June 1860: Collection Margry; Mer to Min., 4 Oct. 1860: ANOM, Carton 42; Rougeyron to Goujon, n.d. (quoted in Guillain, 'De la Mission Catholique en Calédonie, et de ses rapports avec le Gouvernement colonial', 6 Apr. 1865): APM/ONC, 11.

Saisset deliberately appointed a commandant to the Isle of Pines in order that the Marists' theocratic grip on tribal affairs might be loosened, and recognition of French sovereignty imposed (Saisset, 'Compte rendu de la situation de la Nouvelle-Calédonie et dépendances au 31 décembre 1859': ANOM, Carton 42).

Furthermore, any measure which might compromise missionary influence amongst the Melanesians, such as the creation of military posts near mission stations, was to be avoided.³⁵

After Saisset's departure mission/government relations reflected the support which the Marists enjoyed in Paris and the orders given to Durand. The latter's attitude was at first correct but cool, and provoked Rougeyron to exclaim, late in 1860: 'nous sommes très bien avec les gens de la Mer [i.e., the commanders of the ships of the local naval station] et seulement bien avec ceux de terre [i.e., Durand]'.³⁶ Although Durand later became more warmly disposed, he was never as enthusiastic about the mission as du Bouzet had been. But the supervision and interference to which missionary activities had been subjected under Saisset ceased, as did harassment by local military commandants. Prompt action by the authorities in 1862 saved the missionaries besieged at Wagap. Rougeyron was

35

Min. to Durand, February 1861 (draft): ANOM, Carton 42. These recommendations seem to have been based to a large extent on three detailed reports submitted to the Minister of the Navy by the captains of the warships Styx, Sibylle and Thisbé, which had recently returned to France after tours of duty in the Pacific (Forget to Min., 15 June 1860: Collection Margry; Mer to Min., 4 Oct. 1860: ANOM, Carton 42; de Cintré to Min., 9 Jan. 1861: ANM, BB4 1036). The most important of the three was that of Mer of the Sibylle. He specifically criticized the complete disregard by the New Caledonian administration of the rights and interests of the Melanesian population and, by extension, the official harassment of the missionaries. According to Mer, the Marists were the only Europeans to concern themselves with the indigenous people.

36

Rougeyron to Procureur, 5 Aug. 1860 (emphasis in original); see also *ibid.*, 12 July 1860: APO.

exultant at the speed with which help was sent, and remarked that for a long time he had had only praise for the actions of the administration towards the mission.³⁷

THE missionary attitude towards repressive measures taken against Melanesians by French naval commanders and later by the colonial administration changed noticeably between 1847 and 1862. There were also differences, which became more obvious after 1855, in the reactions of individual missionaries. At first the Marists tried as far as possible to avoid the use of force, even in situations of extreme danger. They refused to defend themselves with firearms, except by shooting into the air in an attempt to frighten off attackers.³⁸ They tried to dissuade du Bouzet from reprisals against the Puma in 1847, but he insisted that punishment was necessary, since property belonging to the state and to the French Oceanic Society was destroyed and stolen along with that of the mission.³⁹ In 1850 the missionaries abandoned an attempt to settle a number of catechumens from Balad at Yate, in the south-east, rather than use firearms

37

Rougeyron to Procureur, 12 Jan. 1861, 1 Feb. 1862: APO.

38

Grange to Supérieur-général, 18 Sept. 1847: APF 1848, 20:176.

39

Du Bouzet to Gouverneur des Etablissements français de l'Océanie, 22 Sept. 1847: ANOM, Carton 40, CG 1847.

against hostile local tribes.⁴⁰ Later that year, however, a Marist lay brother played an active role in the savage vengeance taken on the Nenema for the Alcmène massacre.⁴¹ In 1855 the Balad mission was abandoned when it became obvious that a large portion of the tribe was prepared to offer violent resistance to the French and their missionary cohorts.

Before 1856 the mission followed a policy of retreat in the face of open Melanesian hostility. In that year, when Conception and St-Louis were attacked by dispossessed local tribes, the missionaries were persuaded by the authorities to remain.⁴² Stiffened by a detachment of troops and provided with arms by the administration, the Christians successfully defended themselves, and later acted as auxiliaries of the government in punitive expeditions against the insurgent tribes. The same year the missionaries requested official aid in a war between Yengen and Mwelebeng, in which the Christians of the latter tribe had become involved. The officer who investigated

⁴⁰ Douarre to Supérieur-général, 10 Jan. 1850: APM/ONC, 5b; Rougeyron to Supérieur-général, 10 June 1850: APF 1851, 23:383.

⁴¹ Early in December 1850, while the French corvette Alcmène was anchored at Balad, its long-boat was cut off at Yengeban, in the Nenema group, and eleven of the crew of fifteen were killed and eaten (Bérard 1854:125-38). The French took harsh reprisals, and claimed to have killed about thirty people, burned fifteen villages, destroyed twelve large canoes and devastated gardens on four of the Nenema islands (ibid., 150). Brother Jean Taragnat actively participated in the campaign as guide and intermediary (ibid., 139; Rougeyron to ? , 3 Jan. 1868: APM/ONC, 11).

⁴² Testard to Rougeyron, [1856]: APM/ONC, 1a.

the complaint described with some misgiving as to its efficacy the method which the two resident missionaries had adopted to bolster the defences:

... les révérends pères, aidés des lumières d'un frère lai qui, dans sa jeunesse, avait été pourvoyeur d'une pièce à la bataille de Staouéli, avaient monté un vieux pierrier dans un tronc d'arbre creusé en auge, et espéraient merveilles de ce canon primitif porté à dos d'hommes.

43

The change in mission policy from resignation to militancy was partly a response to government pressure, and partly caused by a general change in attitude which occurred after Douarre's death in 1853. The earlier policy was mainly a result of his conviction that it was better not to proselytize at all than to do so with the aid of the sword.⁴⁴ His confreres, especially Rougeyron, shared this viewpoint, but by 1856 successive setbacks had prepared them to accept the need for resistance in the face of unrepentant savagery.

The early policy of retreat was as much a matter of necessity as of conviction. Before annexation the Europeans, missionaries and traders, who attempted to maintain permanent relations with New Caledonians were dependent on Melanesian cooperation for their security and for the success of their

43

Laurent to Min., 13 Jan. 1857: ANOM, Carton 42.

44

Douarre to Supérieur-général, 10 Jan. 1850: APM/ONC, 5b.

undertakings. Their hosts occupied a position of power, and knew it, and Europeans usually fared badly when violence occurred. To have tried to maintain themselves by force once they had been rejected by the traditional society would have exposed the missionaries and their supporters to danger and hardship, and at the same time negated the object of the missionaries' presence. After 1853 the possibility of armed support from the government gradually lessened the problems caused by isolation, and, although not immediately apparent, led to a change in the relationship of dependence between missionaries and Melanesians.

Where possible, after the consolidation of the French position in the south, the administration tried to prevent the involvement of the converts of Pwebo, Wagap and ~~Tuo~~ in wars and military expeditions against the pagan tribes of the north, in order not to distract them from their progress towards civilization.⁴⁵ The government's inability to defend the mission stations before 1862 destroyed this hope, and the purely defensive measures of the Mwelebeng were eventually transformed, with missionary help and encouragement, into a crusade against the pagans. The hard-line policy of Matthieu Gagnière and Jean Villard was very different from the one of resignation and retreat which Douarre had advocated, although

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Du Bouzet to Min., 25 Nov. 1857: ANOM, Carton 42; de Broglie to ? , 28 Dec. 1859: APM/ONC, 4.

his viewpoint may well have altered under the changed circumstances of the colonial régime.⁴⁶

Although the missionaries were anxious to dissociate themselves from the punitive measures taken by the government, they hoped that repression would cause previously hostile tribes to turn to the mission. After the burning of the Pwebo church in 1858, in which Bwarat's brother was implicated, Gagnière hoped that the administration would punish the Yengen, exact reparations and set up a post there. He felt that a missionary could then approach the chastised tribe in the role of mediator and benefactor, whereas to send a priest there immediately would risk association of the mission with any military repression which might occur:

Si on se hâte d'y aller au devant de la paix, avant que la justice soit exécutée, cette tribu toujours orgueilleuse pouvait bien au lieu de la reconnaissance nous faire sentir son ressentiment pour l'affaire de Buarate ... Si par contre les missionnaires arriveront après le Gouvernement pour servir d'intermédiaires de la paix après l'abaissement juste de son orgueil, ils seront sans doute regardés comme des bienfaiteurs et des sauveurs ...

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Montrouzier, however, held that the importance of the tribe and the constant threat of adverse English influence demanded immediate action by the mission, and his view held sway. He hoped that his presence at Yengen would discourage official

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Gagnière to Procureur, 2 Jan. 1859; Villard to Procureur, 13 May, 16 Aug. 1860: APO.

47

Gagnière to Procureur, 2 Jan. 1859: APO.

reprisals, and even after his hurried departure he viewed with distaste the idea of a punitive expedition.⁴⁸ Despite these misgivings, he was exultant after the expedition of 1859, mainly because it seemed to have achieved an important victory over the English: 'Les Anglais ont levé le masque. C'est fort heureux. On pourra maintenant agir'.⁴⁹ Subsequent events and the violence of the pagan reaction, however, caused him to regret bitterly the 'mesures incomplets' which the governor had taken at Yengen.⁵⁰

Rougeyron stressed that the missionaries did not ask for the expedition against Yengen, but he did not regret its occurrence.⁵¹ He expressed similar sentiments in 1862, in regard to Durand's Wagap expedition. Father Eugène Barriol tried unsuccessfully to intercede with the administration on behalf of four Wagap chiefs who were condemned to death for their complicity in the attacks. Rougeyron commented that they deserved their fate, and dismissed Barriol's action as an expression of the missionary's duty to show mercy: '... on a voulu que la justice eut son cours; on a eu raison, mais

48

Montrouzier to his brother, 8 Mar. 1859: APM/Personal file (Montrouzier); Montrouzier to Procureur, 5 June 1859: AP0.

49

Montrouzier to Procureur, 13 Sept. 1859: AP0.

50

Ibid., 7 Apr. 1860: AP0.

51

Rougeyron to Procureur, [c.August], 27 Oct. 1859: AP0.

c'était notre devoir de montrer de la bonté et de la clémence'.⁵² Rougeyron hoped that the expedition would teach the rebel tribes a lesson, and supported the creation of a military post at Wagap, even though the only viable site was close to the mission.⁵³ His ideal was a colony in which Christian and well-disposed tribes would retain their lands intact and inalienable to Europeans, while those which rejected the twin benefits of civilization and Christianity should be expelled from their territory:

Qu'on laisse aux tribus où nous sommes établis toutes leurs terres, sans que rien ne soit vendu aux blancs, mais qu'on y refoule d'autres tribus, où nous ne sommes pas encore établis, c'est ce que nous désirons, et c'est ainsi ce que doit désirer le gouvernement.

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The arrogance which inspired such a statement was far removed from Douarre's avowal in 1850 of complete dedication to the interests and well-being of Melanesians, in the event of the annexation of New Caledonia by a European power.⁵⁵ Rougeyron's recommendation of harassment for the unconverted and denial of their rights compares ironically with the outraged terms in

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Rougeyron to Procureur, 23 Feb. 1862; see also Thomassin to Procureur, 4 Feb. 1862: APO.

53

Rougeyron to Procureur, 1, 5 Feb., 27 May 1862: APO.

54

Rougeyron to Procureur, 21 Feb. 1859: APO.

55

Douarre to Supérieur-général, 2 July 1850: APM/ONC, 5b.

which he and his colleagues later protested against what they regarded as deliberate persecution of the mission and the Christians under Governor Guillain.

BEFORE 1862 the local authorities in New Caledonia had to work without clear and consistent directions from Paris, or a settled policy for the development of the colony. There were few serious settlers and little private capital, and the administrative framework was hopelessly inadequate. The adoption of a more coherent and systematic policy was indicated in December 1861 by the appointment of Guillain as governor. The local budget was increased, the administrative machinery reorganized, and plans were advanced for the establishment of a penal settlement, together with the extension of free colonization.⁵⁶

The question of Guillain's relations with the Marist mission was probably the most important single issue of the period 1862-70, at least as far as the missionaries and a large portion of the Melanesian population were concerned. Guillain was intelligent, energetic and able, but his manner was of the quarter-deck. Like his predecessor, Saisset, he was an autocrat by training and conviction. He was determined

56

Testard to Min., 23 Apr. 1858: ANOM, Carton 42; Directeur des Colonies, 'Rapport à l'Empéreur', December 1858 (draft): *ibid.*; Guillain to Min., 6 June, 4 Aug. 1862: ANOM, Carton 26, CG 1855-64; Mon., 8 June 1862.

to enforce unquestioning acceptance of his authority and his point of view throughout the colony and over every segment of its population. He intended to make Melanesians loyal, useful and productive auxiliaries in the rapid development of colonization, both free and penal. Towards the end of his term of office the local Moniteur claimed that his native policy had been inspired by:

... des aspirations civilisatrices, le désir d'utiliser les indigènes aux travaux de la colonisation dont ils profiteraient eux-mêmes.

57

In practice, however, this meant forced labour for Melanesians, especially on public works; the compulsory acquisition of land needed for colonization; military expeditions against recalcitrant tribes, imprisonment, usually without trial, for disobedient individuals and savage reprisals for acts of violence against Europeans or allies of the government; the replacement of mission influence over Melanesians in temporal matters by that of the government, and the restriction of the missionaries to purely ecclesiastical affairs.⁵⁸ The related

57

Mon., 14 Feb. 1869.

58

Guillain to Min., 30 Apr., 31 May 1863: ANOM, Carton 26, CG 1855-64; Guillain, 'De la Mission Catholique en Calédonie...', 6 Apr. 1865: APM/ONC, 11; Guillain to Min., 3 Sept. 1865: ANM, BB4 847; Conseil d'administration, 28 Feb. 1867: ANOM, Carton 90.

questions of missionary influence over Melanesians and the extent of ecclesiastical jurisdiction were the focal points of the bitter conflict which marked mission/government relations during Guillain's governorship.⁵⁹

By 1862, in areas like Conception, Pwebo, Belep and the Isle of Pines, the Marists, working through the authority of pious chiefs, had come to exercise a broad control over many aspects of tribal life.⁶⁰ Traditional patterns of settlement changed as people moved from surrounding areas to settle near a mission, and sometimes went far from their tribes to Conception and St-Louis.⁶¹ Entire tribes were organized

59

Rougeyron to Procureur, 2 Sept. 1862: APM/ONC, 20; Guillain to Rougeyron, 17, 29 Dec. 1863: *ibid.*, 1b; Rougeyron to Procureur, 2 Feb. 1864: APO; Rougeyron to Guillain, 1 May 1866: APM/ONC, 11; Forestier, 'Etat de rapports entre Mr le Gouverneur de la Nlle Calédonie et le Provicair apostolique', [August 1867]: *ibid.*; Guillain to Min., 10 Sept. 1867: ANOM, Carton 166; Guillain, Report, [1868]: APM/ONC, 22.

60

Late in 1862, Lieutenant Commander Hardy, well known as a devout Catholic and an admirer of the mission, commented in a confidential memo to the governor on the extent of missionary authority in certain tribes: '... il est résulté pour moi que l' influence des missionnaires sur les indigènes est encore plus politique que morale; que dans toutes leurs affaires intérieures aussi bien que dans leurs démêlés avec les tribus voisines, les chefs sont naturellement conduits à se laisser guider par eux; qu'en l'absence de contact fréquent avec les représentants naturels de l'autorité, ces influences partielles tendent à grandir, et se centralisent entre les mains du Supérieur des Missions, dont la tournée d'inspection pourrait avoir un but plus politique que religieux': Hardy to Guillain, [1862] (quoted in Guillain, 'De la Mission Catholique en Calédonie...', 6 Apr. 1865): APM/ONC, 11.

See below, ch.V, passim, for examples of missionary authority in action at Pwebo.

61 Rougeyron to Supérieur-général, 10 Oct. 1856: APM/ONC, 5d; Forestier to Procureur, 7 Aug. 1861; Goujon to Procureur, 1 Dec. 1861; Rougeyron to Procureur, 23 Oct., 31 Dec. 1862: APO.

to produce bêche-de-mer and coconut oil, a proportion of the proceeds of which went to finance church-building, the purchase of clothes and the upkeep of the mission.⁶² At Pwebo almost everyone worked one week in four on the construction of a church.⁶³ Pagan parents were strongly urged to send their children to live at a mission station and attend lessons there.⁶⁴ Traditional festivals, regarded as immoral, were proscribed by all but a few missionaries, who attempted to convert them into Christian ceremonies.⁶⁵ Christian chiefs and catechists were instructed to impose punishments for misbehaviour, including dereliction of religious duties, and tended to be over-zealous in the exercise of their authority, which owed much to missionary prestige.⁶⁶ Men like

62

E.g., Pwebo and Belep (Rougeyron to Supérieur-général, 29 Sept. 1862: APM/ONC, 20); Pwebo (Mathieu to Durand, 22 July 1861: ANOM, Carton 42; Guitta to Procureur, 9 July 1865, APO; Arama (Rougeyron to Procureur, 23 Oct. 1862: APO; Thiercelin 1866, I: 279-80, 305-6); Isle of Pines (Goujon to Procureur, 20 Nov. 1865: APO).

63

Villard to Procureur, [1861]; Forestier to Procureur, 7 Aug. 1861: APO.

64

Villard to Rougeyron, 7 Nov. 1867: APM/ONC, 22.

65

J.M. Villard, 'Mémoire sur la catastrophe de Pouébo en 1867': AVNC; see below, p. 212.

66

At Yengen the agents - a catechist and a 'gendarme' - of Father Joseph Thomassin had people arrested for failure to attend prayer meetings. Thomassin was said by the authorities to have acquiesced in their activities (Guillain, 'De la Mission Catholique en Calédonie...', 6 Apr. 1865: APM/ONC, 11; cf. Rougeyron to Procureur, 16 June, 3 Aug. 1863; Forestier to Procureur, 1 Aug. 1863; Lambert to Procureur, 4 Aug. 1863: APO).

Montrouzier, Goujon and Thomassin were often rigid and intolerant, and despised most Europeans.⁶⁷ This was important, because the missionaries mediated in almost every dealing between their followers and other Europeans, whether officials or civilians, if for no other reason than that the local missionary was generally the only interpreter available in a particular area. Thus the Marists arranged for the administration and colonists to hire labourers from Conception, and, again, most of the proceeds went into a common fund.⁶⁸ Missionaries moved from place to place, despatched catechists, purchased land from Melanesians in defiance of colonial legislation, built chapels, dwellings, schools, started new stations, all without official sanction, and generally without informing the administration of their activities.⁶⁹ The Marists would not abandon their position without a struggle, and were naturally determined to use every means at their disposal to acquire similar influence elsewhere.

67

E.g., Montrouzier to Procureur, 7 Apr. 1860: APO: 'Que les Européens sont méchants! Une fois ils n'étaient qu'indifférents, maintenant ils sont impies et le vice les emprisonne'.

68

Forestier to Procureur, 13 Dec. 1859: APO; Poupinel to archevêque de Bordeaux, 2 Dec. 1863: ANOM, Carton 166.

69

Gagnière to Procureur, 2 Aug. 1862; Rougeyron to Procureur, 2 Nov., 31 Dec. 1862: APO; Guillain, 'De la Mission Catholique en Calédonie ...', 6 Apr. 1865: APM/ONC, 11.

This situation had irked Saisset, and became intolerable to Guillain. The unrestricted movement of missionaries and their followers made administration difficult, in view of Guillain's plans to rationalize Melanesian land holdings and organize the indigenous population to suit the demands of government policy. He resented missionary pretensions and justifiably accused them of opposing the spread of colonization.⁷⁰ He objected to their usurpation of chiefly powers, and to their interference in the administration's relations with Melanesians, especially when this led the latter to protest against government actions. Christians tended to be inconveniently aware of their rights as French subjects, and with missionary assistance their complaints were sometimes heard in Paris.⁷¹ Guillain considered it to be detrimental to the interests of the colony that Melanesians should contribute their labour and the proceeds of their commerce to the mission, and accused the latter of operating 'un système d' accaparement illégal et même coupable' in the Christian tribes.⁷² By this

70

'Décision du Gouverneur suspendant l'indigène Bonou (Hippolyte) de ses fonctions de second chef de Pouébo', 26 Apr. 1866: Mon., 6 May 1866; Guillain to Min., 8 Mar. 1868: ANOM, Carton 166; cf. Rougeyron to Procureur, 21 Feb. 1859 (see above, p. 163), 3 Aug. 1863; Lambert to Procureur, 24 June 1863; Goujon to Procureur, 2 July 1863: APO.

71

See below, p. 250.

72

Guillain, 'De la Mission Catholique en Calédonie ...', 6 Apr. 1865: APM/ONC, 11.

reasoning the Marists had acquired a monopoly in trade and labour, and their followers accordingly were unwilling to work for either colonists or the administration.⁷³ In practice, however, Melanesians in general were loath to work regularly for Europeans, and Christians tended to bear the imposition of forced labour with greater stoicism than the more independent pagan tribes.⁷⁴

Both Guillain and the missionaries exaggerated the other side's position. The Marists and their supporters depicted Guillain, even before his arrival in the colony, as an anti-clerical fanatic, determined to destroy Catholicism in New Caledonia, a follower of at least one of the heinous doctrines of freemasonry, Saint-Simonism or Fourierism:

L'antipathie de Mr. le Gouverneur contre les missions existait même avant son départ de France. Nous le savions et il ne s'en cachait lui-même... Il ne s'agit pas d'un manque de foi, ou d'un malveillance ordinaire, mais d'une opposition systématique, ardente, prosélytique, qui se fait jour dans toutes les circonstances ...

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⁷³ Anon., 'Rapport particulier à l'Empereur', 23 Oct. 1867: ANOM, Carton 166: '... elle fait le commerce la sainte congrégation; si ce n'est à la plus grande gloire de Dieu, c'est à son plus grand profit à elle. Elle s'est réservé le trafic avec les Kanaks chrétiens, leur achète et leur vend ... Défense est faite aux caboteurs de commercer avec ses clients'. See also Bailly to Guitta, 15 Oct. 1865: APM/ONC, 25; Bailly to Bonu, 1 Jan. 1866: *ibid.*; Guitta to Rougeyron, 27 May 1866: *ibid.*

In 1859 Montrouzier had condemned the mission's trading operations at Belep and Pwebo as an infringement of Canon Law and an unnecessary source of friction with the administration and the civilian population of the colony (Montrouzier to Procureur, 17 Aug. 1859: APO).

74

Durand to Min., 26 May 1860: ANOM, Carton 42; see below, pp.295-7.

75

Supérieur-général to Min., 7 Sept. 1864 (not sent): APM/ONC, 15b; see also Rougeyron to Procureur, 22 Nov. 1861, 23 Nov. 1862: APO;

Guillain developed a system of penal colonization which stressed mutual cooperation and the human dignity of the convict, he encouraged the formation of a friendly society, and set up an agricultural commune, all of which suggests that he espoused at least some of the tenets of utopian socialism.⁷⁶

Like most upper class French anti-clericals, he accepted the social necessity for religious institutions:

... dans ma pensée l'oeuvre d'évangélisation entreprise par la Mission sur les indigènes, se liait intimement à l'oeuvre de civilisation par l'autorité coloniale.

77

However, he deplored the intolerant, ultramontane attitude of a religious order which was not even recognized in France, and he called for the appointment of a secular clergy which would have no pretext to meddle in temporal affairs.⁷⁸ He would

75 cont.

Rougeyron to Poupinel, 2 Sept. 1862: APM/ONC, 20; de Cintré to Forestier, 27 Feb. 1866: *ibid.*, 25; Anon., 'Le Guillainisme', n.d.: *ibid.*; Lambert to Procureur, 19 Jan. 1869: APO.

76

Mon., 10, 17, 31 Jan., 15 May, 6 June 1864; Guillain to Min., 10 Sept. 1867: ANOM, Carton 166. An admirer of the governor remarked that 'dans sa jeunesse, il a été Saint-Simonien et d'opinion avancée' - much as Louis-Napoléon Bonaparte had been (Anon., 'Rapport particulier à l'Empéreur', 23 Oct. 1867: ANOM, Carton 166). Guillain, in fact, claimed that his agricultural commune at Yate was based on the model expounded in Bonaparte's Extinction du Paupérisme (1844).

77

This outline of Guillain's religious attitudes is based on Guillain, 'De la Mission Catholique en Calédonie...', 6 Apr. 1865: APM/ONC, 11.

78

Guillain to Min., 10 Sept. 1867: ANOM, Carton 166; Guillain, Report, [1868]: APM/ONC, 22.

tolerate 'l'oeuvre d'évangélisation entreprise par la Mission sur les indigènes' as long as the representatives of the church were completely subservient to the state, and worked in conformity with government policy. In Guillain's eyes, however, the Marists were engaged in a sinister conspiracy 'organiser ... un gouvernement plus ou moins occulte, en dehors, ou même au détriment du gouvernement colonial'. He claimed that they were 'plus romains que français', and that they sought to enjoy in a French colony the same broad jurisdiction which they had exercised under papal brief before annexation. He was unconvinced of their value as a pacifying and civilizing influence. To Guillain their methods were based on coercion, tended to divide tribes, and led to conflicts into which the administration was dragged in defence of missionary interests.

To the Marists, who believed their own motives to be entirely selfless and regarded their influence over Melanesians as beneficial in every respect, his attitude was inexplicable except in terms of godlessness, deliberate misrepresentation and blatant opportunism:

Le peu d'influence que le missionnaire a pu acquérir avec du temps et de la peine offusque M.le Gouv. d'une manière extraordinaire et il paraît décider à la diminuer à tout prix.

79

 79

Lambert to Procureur, 4 Aug. 1863: APO; see also Rougeyron to Procureur, 2 Feb. 1864: APO; [Forestier] to Min., [1865] (draft): APM/ONC, 15b; Rougeyron to ? , 3 Jan. 1868: *ibid.*, 11; Anon., 'Le Guillainisme', n.d.: *ibid.*, 25.

Each side accused the other of abusing the right of liberty of conscience. In neither case was the charge unfounded. The Marists opposed the admittance of Protestant missionaries or teachers, and they were unwilling to accord the right of Melanesians to reject Catholic missionaries, or the right of parents to determine whether their children became Christian or not.⁸⁰ Guillain justifiably criticized the Marists on these grounds, and yet he refused to allow them freedom to evangelize, used threats, force and bribery against their followers, and discriminated in favour of pagans against Christians.⁸¹ The two parties were irreconcilable because they were in direct competition for influence over the Melanesians, and neither would nor could compromise to the extent necessary to permit co-existence. Neither had any understanding of or sympathy for the other's position, and each was totally convinced of the justice of its own cause and of the unworthy motives of the other.

DURING Guillain's governorship the degree of animosity between mission and government steadily increased, and the missionaries were forced more and more on to the defensive by the methods

80

Rougeyron to Procureur, 2 Nov. 1862, 20 Nov. 1865; Emprin to Procureur, 5 Mar. 1865: APO; Guillain to Min., 10 Sept. 1867: ANOM, Carton 166; Guillain, Report, [1868]: APM/ONC, 22; Vitte to Min., 26 July 1874: *ibid.*, 19.

81

See below, pp. 176-9.

used against them. Until the end of 1863 external relations were reasonably polite, despite missionary forebodings, and the governor's attempts to diminish their influence and make them submit to official control and supervision.⁸²

Guillain's labour, education and land policies were especially repugnant to the missionaries, and a controversy over schools helped cause an open breach early in 1864.⁸³ The acute labour shortage in the colony and Melanesian unwillingness to work for Europeans led Guillain to impose corvées, mainly for public works, upon all tribes which had accepted French sovereignty. Workers were fed, clothed and paid a small wage, but the measure was highly unpopular, defections were frequent, and were harshly punished.⁸⁴ The main burden fell upon Christians or tribes which were subject to missionary influence, because in 1862 this included most of the pacified tribes. Later, when the government's strictures against the Marists had caused an obvious division between the supporters of the administration and the followers

82

Mon., 22, 29 June, 23 Nov. 1862; Rougeyron to Poupinel, 2 Sept. 1862: APM/ONC, 20; Rougeyron to Procureur, 27 Feb., 1 Apr., 18 Aug. 1863: APO; Guillain, 'De la Mission Catholique en Calédonie ...', 6 Apr. 1865: APM/ONC, 11.

83

Only the labour and education issues are discussed here. The question of land is treated separately; see, especially, below p.

84

'Décision portant que des indigènes seront engagés pour travailler, à titre de manoeuvres, sur les chantiers du Gouvernement', 19 Jan. 1863: BO 1863: 15-16; Rougeyron to Procureur, 25 Mar. 1863, 10 Sept. 1867: APO; Guillain to Min., 31 May 1863: ANOM, Carton 26, CG 1855-64; Palazzy to Procureur, 19 May 1867: APO.

of the mission, the labour ordinance continued to affect Christians most because Guillain could not risk alienating his pagan allies by making excessive demands upon them. The missionaries opposed forced labour, partly because of its unjust and compulsory character, but more because it seemed to them to be part of a campaign against their influence.⁸⁵ Missionary complaints about the measure prompted the Navy Ministry in Paris to demand an explanation from Guillain. This seems to have been the first, but was by no means the last occasion on which Guillain received an official rebuke as a result of Marist agitation, and it improved neither his attitude nor his behaviour towards them.⁸⁶ Organized forced labour at Port-de-France was greatly curtailed at the end of 1864, mainly because of the need for economy, but local corvées continued. They weighed even more heavily on the Christians, because military posts tended to be close to mission stations.⁸⁷

85

Poupinel to archevêque de Bordeaux, 2 Dec. 1863: ANOM, Carton 166; Rougeyron to Procureur, [March 1864]: APO; Supérieur-général to Min., 7 Sept. 1864 (not sent): APM/ONC, 15b; Goujon to Procureur, 1 Jan., 2 Feb. 1865: APO.

86

Guillain, 'De la Mission Catholique en Calédonie...', 6 Apr. 1865: APM/ONC, 11.

87

Guillain to Min., 3 Sept. 1865: ANM, BB4 847; [Forestier], 'Notes sur la mission de la Nouvelle-Calédonie', [1865]: APM/ONC, 15b; Lambert to Rougeyron, 23 June 1866: *ibid.*, 20; Vincent to Procureur, 14 July 1868; Améline to Procureur, 2 Jan. 1869: APO. Almost all the workers who were forced to remain at Port-de-France were Christians from the Isle of Pines (Goujon to Procureur, 2 Feb. 1865). They were eventually replaced in 1867 by Kanala people (Palazzy to Procureur, 19 Mar. 1867: APO).

In October 1863 the governor promulgated a decree regulating primary education in the colony. Among other conditions, the study of native New Caledonian languages was formally forbidden; all schools were subject to inspection by a committee appointed by the governor; the syllabus taught had to receive official approval.⁸⁸ The Marists interpreted this measure, with some justification, as a deliberate attempt to strike at one of their most effective means of propaganda. They claimed that they could not fulfil the conditions of the decree, and refused to submit their schools to government regulation or to supervision on matters other than 'hygiène, salubrité et moralité'. Following a protracted debate on this issue, the missionaries closed most of their schools rather than attempt to conform to the provisions of the decree.⁸⁹ Again Guillain's actions met with official disapproval, and he was tersely ordered to change his ways. In terms reminiscent of earlier instructions to Durand, Guillain was informed that missionary influence was an excellent (and inexpensive?) means by which French domination could be extended throughout the colony, and that the Marists were therefore to be given every assistance.

88

'Arrêté du Gouverneur...', 15 Oct. 1863: BO 1863:234-8 .

89

Conseil d'administration, 7 Sept. 1863: ANOM, Carton 88; Rougeyron to Supérieur-général, 21 Oct. 1863: APM/ONC, 20; Forestier to Supérieur-général, 4 Dec. 1863 (draft): *ibid.*, 11; Guillain to Rougeyron, 17, 29 Dec. 1863: *ibid.*, 1b; Rougeyron to Procureur, 2, 17 Jan. 1864: APO; Rougeyron to ? , 14 Jan. 1864: APM/ONC, 25.

Si la mission a conquis une certaine influence sur la population indigène, l'administration, loin d'en prendre ombrage, doit au contraire s'en applaudir, comme d'un progrès profitable à la politique de la France et même à notre domination la plus effective.

90

Yet despite scathing repudiation, Guillain's policy on schools remained in force, and until 1870 education in the colony remained effectively, if not efficiently, in the hands of the administration.⁹¹

Guillain's resentment at the critical despatches, and mutual bitterness caused by the schools dispute brought the mission/government conflict into the open early in 1864.⁹² Between this date and 1867 Guillain used every method at his disposal, short of open warfare, to thwart and harass the missionaries. Three Marists were found guilty by a civil court of contravening a law against the provision of firearms

90

'Dépêche ministérielle', 19 Dec. 1864 (quoted in Anon., 'Note sur M^r le Capitaine de Vaisseau Guillain, Gouverneur de la Nouvelle-Calédonie', n.d.): ANOM, Carton 166.

91

Rougeyron to Procureur, 12 Jan. 1865; Artignan to Procureur, 3 Nov. 1865; Lambert to Procureur, 8 Dec. 1865, 4 Feb. 1867: APO; Montrouzier to évêque d'Orléans, 26 Dec. 1865: APM/ONC, 11; [Forestier], 'Etat des rapports entre Mr le Gouverneur de la Nlle Calédonie et le Provicair apostolique', [1867]: *ibid.*; Rougeyron to Yardin, 26 Feb. 1868: *ibid.*, 20. In January 1869 there were only four recognized schools for Melanesians, at Kanala, Wagap, Gatop and on Lifu. They were conducted by soldier-monitors, under the general direction of the local commandants ('Ecoles primaires ouvertes au 1er janvier 1869': ANOM, Carton 172).

92

Mallet to Procureur, 5 Feb. 1864: APO; Supérieur-général to Min., 7 Sept. 1864 (not sent): APM/ONC, 15b.

and ammunition to Melanesians. They incurred a heavy fine, which was later annulled by ministerial order, to Guillain's intense chagrin.⁹³ This setback did not lessen the governor's antipathy. His methods became increasingly harsh and arbitrary, and were directed as much against the supporters of the mission, especially in the north, as against the Marists themselves.⁹⁴ Catechists at Pambwa, Balad, Kumak, Gomen, Cambwen, Wenop and Jawe were arrested and imprisoned on specious grounds; two Christian chiefs of Pwebo were deposed for insubordination; missionaries were refused permission to set up new stations at Kumak and on Mare,⁹⁵ to buy land from Melanesians at Yate and Kanala and on Lifu, to cut wood for building purposes anywhere; Christians were forbidden to help in the construction of chapels and mission dwellings, or to leave their tribal lands for religious gatherings. At Pwebo, colonists were encouraged to settle on lands occupied by Christians. Paganism was actively encouraged, while Christians

93

[Forestier], 'Pièces justificatives', [1864]: APM/ONC, 1b; Guillain, 'De la Mission Catholique en Calédonie...', 6 Apr. 1865: *ibid.*, 11; Artignan to Forestier, 31 May 1865: *ibid.*, 21.

94

For specific examples of the techniques employed against the missionaries and the Christians, see below, chs. 5 and 6 passim.

95

Permission was given for the Marists to start a station on Mare in November 1865, after more than three years' haggling (Beaulieu to Procureur, 22 Nov. 1865: APO).

were led to apostatize by threats or bribes, and potential converts were bullied and forced to reject the missionaries. After a tour of the various mission stations in 1866 Lambert exclaimed in despair:

... au nom de la liberté des cultes singulièrement interprêtée, le paganisme n'est pas seulement toléré, mais encore encouragé, protégé, récompensé. Les païens, les apostats, les incendiaires, les libertins de tout genre ont le droit de tout dire et de tout faire pour détourner les âmes encore faibles dans la foi, et pas le moindre blâme ne leur est adressé, et si on porte des plaints contre de semblables actes, il y a toujours des circonstances atténuants pour les absoudre. Les pauvres chrétiens indigènes, au contraire, ne peuvent plus défendre leur droits les plus légitimes sans voir éclater l'orage sur leur tête et aggraver leur position.

96

Military posts were set up near mission stations, and local commandants were said to have been specifically ordered to harass the missionaries and their followers.⁹⁷ At Wagap, for example, Christians were forced to cultivate gardens for

96

Lambert to Rougeyron, 23 July 1866: APM/ONC, 20. Some indication of the colonial government's priorities was given in an article in the journal Opinion nationale (21 Mar. 1865: ANOM, Carton 26, CG 1865-9), which commented: 'La colonisation se développe avec rapidité, malgré les anthropophages, qu'on ne craint que médiocrement, et les Pères Maristes qu'on trouve, paraît-il, plus inquiétants'.

⁹⁷ Goujon to Procureur, 2 Feb. 1865; Gagnière to Procureur, 3 May 1865: APO; correspondence between Chapuy and Venturini, 20 & 21 May 1865: APM/ONC, 25; Guitta to Bailly, 30 Sept. 1865: *ibid.*; Rougeyron to Supérieur-général, 18 Nov. 1869: *ibid.*, 20; Villard, 'Mémoire sur la catastrophe de Pouébo en 1867': AVNC.

the garrison without remuneration, while the way of life of both officers and men seemed deliberately designed to curdle missionary sensibilities:

Depuis long temps, les chrétiens, de préférence, sont soumis à de fréquentes corvées, et ces pauvres Calédoniens ... sont obligés de venir travailler et de se nourrir ... pour planter les champs qu'ils préparent au bénéfice du camp.... De plus le camp de Ouagap est un centre de corruption et d'irréligion. Bon nombre de femmes sont dans le camp même ... Voilà pourtant ces centres qu'on nous désigne avec emphase comme des foyers de lumière et de civilisation où la jeunesse calédonien doit venir se former.... on ne leur apprend pas même à se couvrir. 98

Guillain's opposition to the Marists' more exclusive pretensions, and measures such as his refusal, in accordance with colonial legislation, to allow them to purchase land directly from Melanesians, were in the best interests of the colony. But in general, after 1864, his methods were at best excessively legalistic, and caused hardship and distress for many Melanesians

Late in 1864 the Marists sent Forestier to France to represent their interests and to press discreetly for Guillain's replacement.⁹⁹ Between 1864 and 1868 Guillain managed to alienate almost every segment of the colony's European population, with the exception of a few loyal cronies. Ironically

98

Lambert to Rougeyron, 23 July 1866: APM/ONC, 20.

99

Rougeyron to Forestier, 10 Dec. 1864: APM/ONC, 20.

his most bitter opposition came from two groups which were in almost every other respect mutually antagonistic - the Marists and the free settlers. Colonists complained bitterly about the unimaginative military autocracy by which the colony was governed, about an excess of petty regulation which hampered commerce and placed serious obstacles in the way of those who wished to obtain freehold land. The case for the commercial element, which was mostly of English origin and depended strongly on the Australian colonies for its transport and supplies, was put by the Sydney Morning Herald. That newspaper, in the least critical of two editorials, fulminated against Guillaïn's régime as

... a grim military system - a reign of terror which makes everything feel damp and cold, - which spreads everywhere an idea of danger; which stamps upon commerce the character of gambling, and upon the adventure of the person and life within such a sphere as an excess of foolhardiness.

1

As far as the landholders - both actual and aspiring - were concerned, in fairness to Guillaïn it should be pointed out that one of their main griefs against him stemmed from his paternalistic resolve that Melanesians should be exploited by the administration alone; that is, that Melanesian land was inalienable except to the government. The settler community

 1

Sydney Morning Herald, 12 Jan. 1865; see also *ibid.*, 20 Jan. 1865.

would naturally have preferred to be able to deal directly with Melanesians, in the belief that traditional claimants would be quickly and cheaply dispossessed. Guillain's rigid application of the land laws, and his refusal to agree to large concessions which would have caused widespread dislocation of Melanesian landholdings, won him several influential enemies.²

Merchants, landholders, some senior administrative, military and naval personnel joined with the Marists and their supporters to direct a stream of complaints to the Navy Ministry about Guillain's behaviour and character.³ The controversy produced a number of polemical articles in the French press, in which the anti-Guillain forces were more prominent than his apologists.⁴ The criticism bore fruit, as from 1864 onwards Guillain's conduct and policies were the

2

See below, p

3

E.g., Poupinel to Directeur des Colonies, 23 Nov. 1863: ANOM, Carton 166; Anon. to Faucon (sous-chef de bureau au Ministère de la Marine), 10 Apr. 1865: *ibid.*; Pannetrat to Directeur des Colonies, 4 Sept. 1865, 12 Jan. 1866: *ibid.*; Desmoulin to Min., 6 Oct. 1865: *ibid.*; Forestier to Directeur des Colonies, 16 Mar. 1867: *ibid.*; Guillain to Min., 4 Apr. 1866: ANOM, Carton 26, CG 1865-9.

4

E.g., Opinion nationale, 21 Mar. 1865: ANOM, Carton 26, CG 1865-9 (pro-Guillain); Epoque, 28 Sept. 1865: *ibid.*; Le Nord, 23 Oct. 1868: *ibid.*; Liberté coloniale, 26 Mar. 1870: *ibid.* (all anti-Guillain). See also Montrouzier to the editor of Revue du Monde colonial, 27 Dec. 1865: APM/ONC, 11; Guillain to Min., 6 Dec. 1867: ANOM, Carton 166; Sentis (French Consul in Sydney) to Poupinel, [1868]: APM/ONC, 22; Mon., 31 Jan. 1869.

subject of numerous official rebukes and unfavourable reports within the Ministry.⁵ Despite official disapproval and the thinly-veiled attempts of his opponents, the Marists especially, to procure his dismissal, not only did Guillain remain, but in 1868, as a very senior captain about to reach retiring age, he was promoted to rear-admiral in order that his term of office might be extended. It had been reported by a Marist in 1863 that Guillain frequently boasted of his powerful connections:

"Je ne relève que de l'empéreur, j'ai un blanc-seing de Sa Majesté. Elle approuve en avance tout ce que je ferai en Nlle Calédonie".

6

5

E.g., Min. to Directeur du Personnel, 25 July 1863 (draft): ANOM, Carton 26, CG 1855-64; Min. to Guillain, October 1864 (draft): *ibid.*; Min. to Guillain, 22 May, 3 Dec. 1868, 25 Feb. 1869 (drafts): ANOM, Carton 26, CG 1865-9; Min. to Ruillier, 30 May 1870: *ibid.* An anonymous 'Note sur Mr le Capitaine de Vaisseau Guillain' (n.d. [draft]: ANOM, Carton 166) accused Guillain of applying 'des principes diamétralement opposés à ceux qui guident la marche du Gouvernement de l'Empéreur'.

In the Colonial Archives I found only one ministerial despatch which actually praised Guillain's conduct (Min. to Guillain, 21 Aug. 1863 [draft]: ANOM, Carton 26, CG 1855-64). One other document, an unsigned, undated minute which must have been written in 1868, approached the mission/government controversy in a nonpartisan, pragmatic manner. The writer concluded:

... la situation est plus que tendue elle exige une résolution. Si la mission n'accepte pas la subordination politique et administrative ... il faut prendre un parti soit à son égard, soit à l'égard de M. Guillain (ANOM, Carton 166).

6

Poupinel to archevêque de Bordeaux, 2 Dec. 1863: ANOM, Carton 166.

At the time the missionaries gave little credence to the claim, but it quickly became apparent to Forestier in France that the governor enjoyed such high patronage that the most his enemies could hope to achieve was to force him to moderate his actions. The exact nature of Guillain's link with Louis-Napoléon is unknown, but it is certain that he was the Emperor's personal nominee, and that he owed his continued tenure, in the face of mounting pressure for his removal, to his imperial protector.⁷

THE conflict between mission and colonial government entered a new phase with the massacre in October 1867 of a number of gendarmes and colonists by apostate and pagan members of the Mwelebeng tribe.⁸ Although almost no Christians were involved, Guillain seized the opportunity to expose the mission to public censure, and perhaps bring about its expulsion from the colony. In the government-controlled Moniteur and in Guillain's official reports it was at first

7

Forestier to Procureur, 25 May 1865, 26 July 1867; Vincent to Procureur, 14 July 1868: APO; O'Reilly 1953: 111. Martial Housez, a former aide to Guillain, reported that 'Mme Guillain était liée d'amitié à Mme Cornu, soeur de lait de l'Empereur Napoléon III' (Housez 1897:14). Mme Cornu was one of the closest and certainly one of the most admirable of Louis-Napoléon's friends (Gooch 1960:69-72). Forestier, too, was led to believe that her influence was the key to Guillain's retention of his post (Forestier to Yardin, 28 Nov. 1866; APM/ONC, 7a).

The unsubstantiated suggestion was also made that Guillain had been a crony of Louis-Napoléon during his youthful revolutionary period (Canac, 'Rapport sur l'audience accordée par S.M. l'Empereur au R.P. Forestier en 1866', 1912: APM/ONC, 25).

8

See below, p. 253 et seq.

implied and later openly stated that the murders were a direct and natural result of anti-administration and anti-colonist propaganda by the missionaries Jean Villard and Jérôme Guitta:

... les Missionnaires de la localité, les PP. Villard et Guitta, surtout, y ont pris moralement au moins une part importante par leurs actes antérieurs.

9

This theme was developed during the trial of twenty-six men accused of complicity in the murders and subsequent pillage of European property. Three defence counsel and the representative of the injured parties, all either government functionaries or military personnel, based their cases on the concept of the moral responsibility of the missionaries:

'... les moteurs seulement imprudents, je veux le croire, des événements ... de Pouébo ... sont les Pères Villard et Guitta'.

10

The exaggerated smear campaign mounted by these men was sharply rebuked in a ministerial despatch, which criticized Guillain implicitly as the person ultimately responsible for their actions:

 9

Guillain to Min., 8 Mar. 1868: ANOM, Carton 166; see also Mon., 21 Oct. 1867; Guillain to Min., 23 Oct., 4 Dec. 1867: ANOM, Carton 166; Guillain to Champestève, 14 Nov. 1867 (encl. in Guillain to Min., 8 Mar. 1868): *ibid.*

10

Address of Le Boucher, defence counsel at the Tribunal criminel de Nouméa, 28 Dec. 1867: Mon., 5 Jan. 1868 (emphasis in original). See also the addresses of Mage and Nepveur before the same Tribunal: Mon., 29 Dec. 1867, 5 Jan. 1868.

Après les recommandations que je vous ai adressées, en ce qui touche vos rapports avec la Mission, je ne puis croire que vous ayez autorisé MM. Mage et Nepveur à choisir le terrain sur lequel ils se sont placés à l'audience et j'aime à penser que vous leur avez témoigné votre mécontentement. Je vous charge de leur infliger en mon nom un blâme sévère et une punition disciplinaire.

11

. No judgement was passed at this trial, and the tribunal ordered a detailed examination to be made into the causes of the crimes. During the supplementary investigation the administration went to ludicrous extremes to try to implicate the missionaries, and Villard and Guitta were exiled from the Pwebo circonscription on the grounds that their presence was a threat to public order.¹² In Nouméa wild rumours circulated about their past actions at Pwebo. Jules Patouillet, a medical officer attached to the Wagap post, reported that Villard 'fut accusé d'avoir eu connaissance du complot, et d'avoir reçu des noirs une hache en jade pour prix de son silence'.¹³ The accusation could not be proven. An even more bizarre rumour insisted that the missionaries had secretly detached the head from the body of the Mwélebeng

11

Min. to Guillain, [1868]: ANOM, Carton 166.

12

Conseil d'administration, 16 Feb. 1868 (transcript encl. in Guillain to Min., 8 Mar. 1868): ANOM, Carton 166; Guillain to Min., 8 Mar., 2 Oct. 1868: *ibid.* Cf. Rougeyron to Forestier, 8 Mar. 1868: APM/ONC, 22.

13

Patouillet 1872:54.

chief Bonu, who had died in exile on the Isle of Pines. They were supposed to have carried the trophy to Pwebo and incited the vengeance of the Mwelebeng by displaying it to them with the words, 'Là voilà la tête de ce grand chef, que pensez-vous maintenant?' So seriously was this regarded that during the supplementary investigation a commission was sent to the Isle of Pines to exhume and examine the body. It was found to be intact and scarcely decomposed.¹⁴

At a second hearing the public prosecutor, a recent arrival in the colony, condemned the authors of the campaign against the missionaries, and expressed the opinion that the latter were completely blameless in the affair.¹⁵ No civil or criminal action was brought against them, and public opinion, which had for a time been strongly antipathetic, changed in their favour as the extravagance of the government's accusations became apparent.¹⁶

In the meantime, the exigencies of building a military post at Pwebo had resulted in excessive demands for

14

[Champestève], 'Affaire de Pouébo. Partie du réquisitoire du ministère public se rapportant à la mission', [8 May 1868]: APM/ONC, 25; see also Rougeyron to Procureur, 1 Feb. 1868: APO; Poupinel to Forestier, 26 Feb. 1868: APM/ONC, 22.

15

[Champestève], 'Affaire de Pouébo. Partie du réquisitoire du ministère public se rapportant à la mission', [8 May 1868]: APM/ONC, 25.

16

In January 1868 a group of settlers got up a petition demanding the expulsion of the Marists from the colony (Moris to Procureur, 28 Jan. 1868; Vincent to Procureur, 20 Feb. 1868: APO). Nothing seems to have come of this, however, and within a month opinion had turned in the missionaries' favour (Mallet to Procureur, 4 Feb. 1868; Rougeyron to Procureur, 6 Mar. 1868: APO).

labour, which affected both Christian and pagan tribes of the north-east. Resentment over the corvées and the ill-treatment which accompanied them finally culminated in a violent reaction, mainly by the pagan Tea Janu. In the operations of reprisals mounted by the government, the people of Bonde, many of them Christians, and Pambwa suffered most. They were less culpable than the Tea Janu, but the latter's tribal lands were in such remote and rugged country as to spare them the worst effects of the military repression.¹⁷ Within New Caledonia Guillain became increasingly isolated with the failure of his attempt to bring public disgrace upon the mission, and gradually he lost all but his most committed supporters.¹⁸ In France, redoubled agitation by the friends of the mission and publicity given to the harsh measures used against the Mwelebeng and the north-eastern tribes in 1867-9 alienated informed public opinion against the governor. The imperial government, beset by recurring crises and ultra-sensitive to the nuances of public opinion, was appalled by the spiralling costs of a policy which seemed to involve endless military expeditions, the creation of more and more military

17

These events are examined in detail, below pp. 288-308.

18

Lambert to Procureur, 19 Jan., 11 Apr. 1869; Rougeyron to Procureur, 15 Mar., 11 April 1869; Vigouroux to Procureur, 16 Mar. 1869; Grézel to Procureur, 25 June 1869; Emprin to Procureur, 27 June 1869: APO.

posts, and the provocation of ever more bitter Melanesian resistance. The governor was informed:

Je comprends les difficultés de toute nature auxquelles vous avez à faire face, mais il ne me paraît pas qu'elles justifient l'ordre que vous avez donné de promener l'incendie et la dévastation sur les territoires des tribus hostiles. Notre civilisation repousse de tels moyens de répression et l'émotion qu'ils soutenaient dans l'esprit public s'ils étaient connus serait de nature à créer des embarras sérieux au Gouvernement de l'Empereur. Les résultats que la mission a obtenus avant notre arrivée ... semblent indiquer qu'il est possible de préparer les voies de la colonisation Européenne sans recourir à d'aussi tristes extrémités. 19

The final sentence was gall indeed to Guillain.

In March 1870 Guillain left New Caledonia for France on grounds of ill health, and he was replaced in June. Under his successor repressive measures against the Marist mission and its supporters ceased. Expeditions were rare and most of the military posts which Guillain had set up were withdrawn. 20 Despite these revisions of policy, and the widespread revulsion which his conduct inspired both in New Caledonia and France, Guillain had some success in the achievement of his original aims.

19

Min. to Guillain, 25 Feb. 1869 (draft); ANOM, Carton 166; see also Le Nord, 23 Oct. 1868: ANOM, Carton 26, CG 1865-9; Min. to Guillain, 7 May, 22 July 1869 (drafts): *ibid.*; Directeur des Colonies to Directeur du Personnel, 27 July 1869 (draft): *ibid.*; marginal comments by Directeur des Colonies on Anon., 'Rapport particulier à l'Empereur', 23 Oct. 1867 (extracts): APM/ONC, 11.

²⁰Min. to Ruillier, 30 May 1870 (draft): ANOM, Carton 26, CG 1865-9; de la Richerie to Min., 30 Dec. 1870: *ibid.*; Anon., 'Nelle Calédonie. Situation au 23 7bre 1870' (draft): *ibid.*; Min. to de la Richerie, 13 Apr. 1871 (draft): *ibid.*

The Melanesians were largely quiescent by 1870, and²¹ in the north were completely cowed. No uprising occurred before the great revolt of 1878, and the tribes which rebelled then included none which had felt the weight of French arms during the 1860's. On the other hand, at least some of the violent clashes which occurred during Guillain's term of office were direct results of government actions, and the eight-year truce which followed his departure was won at considerable cost to Melanesians, especially in the north. Guillain's plan to create a permanent indigenous work force foundered, in part because of lack of funds; in part because his programme of forced labour imposed unnecessarily harsh conditions on Melanesians, and became confused towards the end of the decade with his determination to destroy mission influence by striking at its bases in the Christian tribes. Uprisings in the north in 1865, 1867 and 1868-9 provided Guillain with a pretext for the reorganization of the tribes of this region, and the application of the policy of cantonnement.²² This freed large areas of land for colonization, and European settlement in the north, which only began on any scale in the mid-sixties, increased during the early years of the new decade.²³

21

Guillain to Min., 27 Aug. 1869: ANOM, Carton 166.

22

See below, p

23

Conseil d'administration, 6 Aug. 1869: ANOM, Carton 91;
1 Feb., 14 May 1870: ANOM, Carton 92.

Guillain's mission policy changed in emphasis and method during his term of office. In the early stages he tried in a fairly reasonable manner to impose government control over missionary activities. The stiff-necked intransigence of the Marist response so infuriated him, however, that in the end he tried to discredit the Marists entirely and force their expulsion from the colony. In his original aim he was at least as successful as he could have hoped, but he failed to achieve the more extreme goal which became his obsession in the later years of his governorship. Everywhere by 1870 mission influence over Melanesians in temporal matters was, if not replaced, then at least equalled by that of the administration. In areas such as the western part of Pwebo, Belep and the Isle of Pines, where the mission was firmly established by 1860, Christians generally remained faithful.²⁴ In places such as Bonde, Arama and the south-eastern sub-tribes of Mwelebeng, however, where widespread conversions were only obtained in the early 1860's, apostasy was common in the face of strong pressure from colonists, the Melanesian allies of the government and its local representatives.²⁵ Tribes like Kumak

24

Rougeyron to Supérieur-général, 29 Sept. 1862: APM/ONC, 20; Forestier to Poupinel, 4 Dec. 1862: *ibid.*, 19; Gilibert to Procureur, 26 July 1867; Améline to Procureur, 12, 16 July 1868; Vincent to Procureur, 14 July 1868; Rougeyron to Procureur, 18 Sept. 1868: APO.

25

See below, pp. 229, 238, 240, 244-5.

and Gomen, which showed willingness to listen to mission teaching, were forcibly prevented from doing so. Their catechists were arrested and sent to Port-de-France in irons, and the tribesmen were led to believe that continued good dispositions towards the missionaries would incur official displeasure.²⁶

Elsewhere, as at Yengen and Puma, overt antipathy towards the mission had been repressed by the victories of the Mwelebeng in 1860 and the Wagap expedition of 1862. With Guillain's encouragement, however, anti-missionary sentiments reappeared, Christianity was rejected and the people concerned became enthusiastic adherents of the so-called 'religion des soldats'. To Rougeyron this 'religion' was a matter of disbelief and immorality, inspired, as its name suggests, by the 'licentious soldiery':

... cette religion consiste à ne pas en avoir, comme les anciens soldats du poste de la tribu de Houagape, où elle a pris naissance, qui ne mettaient jamais les pieds à l'Eglise, mais en revanche pratiquaient la morale indépendante. 27

To another priest, however, 'la religion soldat' implied a reversion to older forms of depravity: 'à marcher nus, à reprendre toutes leurs coutumes païennes'.²⁸ Thus, while the

26

Emprin to ? , 13 Jan. 1866: APM/ONC, 25.

27

Rougeyron to ? , 30 Nov. 1867: APM/ONC, 22.

28

Poupinel, n.d. (fragment): APM/ONC, 22.

number of Christians increased slowly during Guillain's régime, there were numerous defections amongst potential converts.²⁹ Furthermore, the possibility of widespread expansion by the mission into new areas, which had seemed unlimited in 1862, was greatly curtailed by the antagonism and concerted opposition of the civil authorities.

GUILLAIN justified his native policy in terms of the need to civilize and assimilate Melanesians. He claimed that the development of new wants would necessitate their learning new skills, and inculcate a desire to work. This would simultaneously benefit the Melanesians, by raising them from their traditional state of savagery, and the colony, by providing a much-needed work force:³⁰

Ce n'est pas la politique d'expédition et d'occupation militaire que je plaide ..., c'est simplement la politique d'organisation et de civilisation, cette politique pacifique qui consiste à lier de bonnes relations avec les indigènes, à nous faire connaître et aimer d'eux en les conseillant et dirigeant suivant leur propre intérêt. 31

29

See Appendix III.

30

'Décision portant que des indigènes seront engagés pour travailler ... sur les chantiers du Gouvernement', 19 Jan. 1863: BO 1863:15-16; Guillain to Min., 31 May, 19 Aug. 1863: ANOM, Carton 26, CG 1855-64; Conseil d'administration, 28 Feb. 1867: ANOM, Carton 90.

31

Guillain to Min., 30 Apr. 1863: ANOM, Carton 26, CG 1855-64.

It is apparent, however, despite such protestations of benevolence, that he regarded Melanesians primarily in terms of their potential utility to the administration and to colonization. Their role in his scheme of things was 'd'aider la colonisation européenne par leur travail'.³² He had no real concept of their existence for their own sake and on their own terms. He was no more convinced of the value or integrity of traditional culture than were most missionaries, and his encouragement of certain of its less violent aspects was a purely pragmatic tactic in his fight against Marist influence.

Indeed, neither side in the mission/government conflict deserves credit for a truly disinterested concern for the rights and welfare of Melanesians. No doubt the Marists proselytized in the sincere, if misguided belief that conversion was in every way beneficial, but they as much as any group of Europeans were responsible for the subversion of the social and cultural integrity and the political complexity of the traditional way of life.³³ Furthermore, the Marists' concern for the mission as an institution outweighed their commitment to Melanesians, the Christians among them included, as human beings, while as regular clergy their missionary vocation was subordinate to their religious vocation. For his

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Speech made by Mathieu, Guillain's colonial secretary and chief of staff, at Pwebo, 28 Feb. 1869: Mon., 26 June 1869.

33

See below, p

part, Guillain's actions indicated clearly enough that his claim to be interested in the well-being of Melanesians was a rationalization for an explicit policy of exploitation.³⁴

Nonetheless, whatever the motives behind Guillain's native policy, it worked to the advantage of those pagan tribes, such as Yengen, Puma, Kanala, Pwe, Manongwe, which enjoyed the status of trusted allies of the administration. Provided they were willing to cede some land for the needs of colonists and the administration, their land rights were respected. Although they all provided workers for the government, no allied tribe was forcibly involved in the corvées at Pwebo in 1868. Yengen and Puma were exempt from the reorganization and resettlement of the northern tribes which occurred in 1869-70. The allied tribes were completely subservient to the authorities, but as long as order was maintained, they enjoyed far more internal autonomy than mission-dominated tribes. Excessively violent or destructive customs (such as cannibalism, murder, infanticide, exposure or burial alive of the old or unwell), which were repugnant to administration and mission alike, tended everywhere to be abandoned or at least concealed with the imposition of French rule, whether a tribe remained

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E.g., the treatment of the Yate people in 1863-4 and the north-eastern tribes in 1868: see below, pp. 291-2, 301-5,

pagan or not.³⁵ But pagan tribes retained some aspects of their traditional culture (such as traditional adornment, polygamy, ceremonies, modes of existence, patterns of settlement, open adherence to customary magic, beliefs and methods), which were generally among the first to disappear with acceptance of Christianity. They gained opportunities for military action, in support of the government, against traditional enemies, and for pillage of defeated tribes in the wake of expeditions.³⁶ They could generally count on government aid in the event of enemy attack, because their cooperation was sufficiently valued to justify some effort and expense.³⁷

Even before 1862, however, tribes like Manongwe, Kanala and Puma had derived similar advantages as allies of the French. The change in situation of these tribes after 1862, as a result of government hostility towards the mission, was one of degree rather than kind. Before Guillain's arrival their continued adherence to paganism was tolerated for reasons of policy, but their attitude towards the mission was generally indifference rather than open antagonism. The small,

³⁵

Patouillet was convinced that the Melanesian fusiliers of Wagap and Gatop indulged in cannibal feasts on the bodies of those slain during punitive expeditions against the enemies of the government. He regarded official connivance as a price which had to be paid for loyal and energetic allies: '... il eût été aussi inutile qu'impolitique de contrarier dans leurs moeurs ces alliés toujours fidèles, et l'on fermait les yeux sur des faits qu'on désespérait, hélas! de pouvoir empêcher' (Patouillet 1872:50).

³⁶ Ibid., 50, 157, 163-4; [Foucher] 1890:73-4.

³⁷ Mon., 11 Nov. 1866, 24 Feb. 1867; Guillain to Min., 27 Aug. 1869: ANOM, Carton 166.

weak Puma tribe had found it politic to aid its traditional enemies, the Mwelebeng, against pagan coalitions. After the Christian victories in 1860 the Puma showed improved dispositions towards the mission, and at no stage did they exhibit the truculent independence with which the people of Kanala rejected the mission in 1859-61.³⁸ The administration's attitude before 1862 was conditioned mainly by shortage of forces. While this factor continued to be relevant, a more pressing motive after 1862 was Guillain's desire to curb mission influence.

On the other hand, the reversal of the official attitude towards the mission after 1862 had a profound effect on mission-dominated tribes, and on those which were prepared to accept mission influence. Most affected were tribes of the north-east: the Mwelebeng and its sub-tribes, the Paak of Bonde, the Maluma of Pambwa, the Arama and the Tea Janu of Webia. The impact of changes in government policy upon these people will be examined in subsequent chapters.

38

Montrouzier to his family, 15 Dec. 1859: AMO, 1:419; Montrouzier to Procureur, 14 June 1859, 7 Apr. 1860; Rougeyron to Procureur, 1 Oct. 1860, 12 Jan. 1861: APO.

CHAPTER V

PWEBO

THE Mwelebeng tribe of Pwebo (Oot) seems traditionally to have been at least as numerous and powerful as Yengen,¹ and was a customary enemy of both Puma and Yengen. It is possible that some Pwebo people may have met members of the earliest European expeditions to visit Balad, since a few Mwelebeng words were transcribed in the vocabularies of Cook and the Forsters.² Contact was almost certainly fleeting, however, because of the reluctance of Puma guides both in 1774 and 1793

1

Early European observers agreed that Mwelebeng was a large, strong tribe, but no reliable population figures are available (Leconte 1847a:766; 1847b:835-6; Tardy de Montravel to Min., 25 Dec. 1854: ANOM, Carton 40, CG 1854). Population estimates suggest a marked decline in numbers during the first twenty years of intensive contact with Europeans, but it is impossible to ascertain with any accuracy the extent to which depopulation occurred. The estimates vary from Leconte's 5,000 in 1846 (Leconte 1847b:822) to Garnier's 7-800 in 1864 (Garnier 1901: 233). They are not worth citing in detail, however, because it is apparent that different observers included different groups in their figures: e.g., according to an official census published in 1870 the Mwelebeng population was 768 ('arrêté du Gouverneur constituant la tribu des Mouélébés ...', 28 Feb. 1870: BO 1870: 169); yet early in 1871 Rougeyron reported that this tribe had 2,352 members (Rougeyron to Supérieur-général, 17 Feb. 1871: APM/ONC, 20). The latter figure evidently referred to the people served by the Pwebo mission, who included groups which had been administratively detached from the Mwelebeng.

2

Haudricourt and Hollyman 1960:225-6; see also Baudoux 1938 which records an oral tradition of the arrival of the first Europeans at Pwebo.

to lead their visitors beyond the mountains south-west of Maamat, which suggests that Puma and Mwelebeng were actually at war on these occasions.³ The earliest reasonably well-documented contact of the Mwelebeng with Europeans occurred in October 1842, when Andrew Cheyne in the English brigantine Bull anchored briefly off Pwebo intending to install a bêche-de-mer fishery there. The visit ended abruptly after an unsuccessful attempt by a large number of Melanesians to take the ship. Cheyne claimed that many New Caledonians were killed, including eight 'high chiefs'.⁴ It is unclear what he meant by this term, but it is unlikely that these men were clan chiefs, since traditionally the chief of a New Caledonian clan took no part in actual combat. This was entrusted to a war chief, a warrior noted for his valour and military ability.⁵ In 1846 Leconte recorded an oral tradition which almost certainly referred to the Bull incident. In this version, however, only one chief was reported to have been killed, which seems more likely than eight. The people of Pwebo were said to have retained a vivid memory of the incident, as would be the case had a distinguished tribesman met his death: 'il leur reste encore le souvenir de ce désastre incompréhensible pour eux'.⁶

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Labillardière 1800, II:197-8; Beaglehole 1961:534, fn. 4.

4

Shineberg 1971:135-42. The incident is examined in detail in Douglas 1971:159-61.

5

Rochas 1862:207; Leenhardt 1930:40-6, 96-7; Guiart 1963:40.

6

Leconte 1847b:823.

THE chieftainship of the Mwelebeng tribe on the arrival of the first Europeans at Pwebo was held by the Tinjin or Tea Mwelebeng, a clan of Uvean origin, related to the Bait of Uvea and to the Maluma of Pambwa (Waap).⁷ The Tinjin and its sub-clans mostly resided to the north-west of the Pwebo river, as far as the boundary with Puma. South-east of the river, in the district known to the missionaries as Pareman,⁸ the inhabitants of the hamlets of Cevit, Kabarik, Pwe-Kabarik,⁹ Bwaibat, Cambwen, Ubac, Yambe¹⁰ add several inland hamlets paid nominal allegiance to the Tinjin. They enjoyed far more independence than the western hamlets, however, and the Tinjin's relations with the more distant villages were infrequent.¹¹ Traditionally the lands of the Mwelebeng tribe ended south of Yambe, but several clans further to the south-east, such as those which lived at Jawe (Waap), Paalo and Wenop, at times accepted the suzerainty of the Mwelebeng chiefs, depending on who held the upper hand in the periodic conflicts between Mwelebeng and Yengen. The hamlet of Wenop,

7

Guiart 1957:26-7; Guiart 1968: Notes; personal communication of Maurice Mouéaou, Pouébo, August 1969.

⁸According to Mathieu the word 'Pareman' referred to coastal people in general (A.Mathieu, 'Rapport...au sujet de la formation de la tribu de Tchambouène...', 6 July 1869: Mon., 5 Sept.1869). Villard, however, specifically applied it to the people who lived along the shore to the south-east of the Pwebo river, and who paid some sort of allegiance to the Tinjin chiefs. In the Mwelebeng context I have adopted this usage.

⁹These clans all spoke the language of Mwelebeng (Mathieu, *ibid.*).

¹⁰These clans all spoke the language of Jawe (*ibid.*).

¹¹J.M. Villard, 'Mémoire sur la catastrophe de Pouébo en 1867': AVNC.

near Cape Colnett, was occupied by members of the Tea Janu tribe of Webia (Oot), who came from the mountains to obtain fish and salt water.¹² Following the Mwelebeng victories over the Tea Janu and the Yengen in 1860, these small, semi-independent tribes were absorbed into the Mwelebeng tribe, although the inhabitants of the area around Cape Colnett continued to pay allegiance to the Tea Janu, and were considered by Guillain's administration to belong to this tribe.¹³

On the beach north of the mouth of the Pwebo river, in a village called Oon (meaning 'sand'), lived a group of Polynesian speakers.¹⁴ They were the descendants of people who had emigrated from Uvea some years before the arrival of Europeans at Pwebo.¹⁵ By 1870 they numbered only twenty, and they were dispersed amongst other villages in the resettlement of the Mwelebeng tribe which occurred in that year.¹⁶ Until 1846, however, they enjoyed a certain prestige and influence

12

Ibid.; H.M.S. Fly, Letterbook.

13

Gagnière to Rougeyron, 12 May 1866: APM/ONC, 22; A.Mathieu, 'Rapport ... sur le meutre du sieur Emmanuel Cosso [par une bande d'indigènes (Tendianous) du village d'Ouénopé]', 24 Feb. 1870: ANOM, Carton 26, CG 1865-9. The status of the Jawe was also a matter for debate. Mathieur referred to them as 'relevant du Chef de Hienguène, bien que le territoire occupé par eux soit revendiqué par les Mouélébés' ('Rapport...au sujet de la formation de la tribu de Diaoué', 8 Dec. 1869: Mon., 6-13 Mar. 1870).

¹⁴Written communication of Professor K.J.Hollyman, 6 July 1970.

¹⁵Six Uveans of Pwebo to Guillain, 29 Apr. 1866 (translation): APM/ONC, 22.

¹⁶'Arrêté du Gouverneur constituant la tribu des Mouélébés...', 28 Feb. 1870: BO 1870:168-9.

in the tribe, as a result of their patronage by the Mwelebeng chiefs, and the marriage of one of their number to the high chief. The second son of this union, Gwa, was the leading chief at Pwebo in 1843, when more or less continuous contact with Europeans began after the arrival of the Marists at Balad.¹⁷

In contrast to Yengen, a single chief was not dominant at Pwebo during the early years of European contact, although the authority of the Tinjin was generally unquestioned, and clan rivalries did not cause internal dissension as in the Puma tribe. For much of this period the legitimate Mwelebeng chief was a child, and the tribe was run by a 'regent', an older relative who customarily retained great influence, even after the young chief was old enough to share power. Gwa acted in this capacity for Tindin, the elder son of his late brother, and Gwa's son, Bonu, filled a similar role while Tindin's brother, Warebat, was a child.

After the settlement of the Marist missionaries at Balad, the Tinjin seem to have been envious of the prestige and the material benefits which the Puma acquired as a result of the Europeans' presence. The Mwelebeng ceased their

17

P. Rougeyron, 'Abrégé de la vie de Hippolyte Bonou': AVNC.

periodic attacks on the weaker tribe,¹⁸ however, probably in part because of their respect for the powerful allies, both physical and spiritual, on which they believed the missionaries could call. Their memory of the Bull incident may well have inclined them towards conciliation to gain the missionaries' favour, rather than violent seizure of mission property. The chiefs expressed to the commander of the Rhin in 1845 their desire that the Marists should settle at Pwebo, and early in 1846 Douarre acquired a fine piece of land from Tindin, with the intention of opening a mission station there.¹⁹ Despite their interest in the mission, the Mwelebeng chiefs at this time showed no desire to accept its spiritual message, and unlike at Balad, where cannibalism and theft diminished, the missionaries' moral influence at Pwebo was limited. Gwa, a shrewd man, paid lip-service to their abhorrence of cannibalism, and exhibited a keen awareness of the advantages which might be derived from cooperation.²⁰ His two younger sons, children of eight or nine years, were ardent supporters of the missionaries, and left New Caledonia with them on the Brillante in August 1847.²¹

18

Rougeyron to Supérieur-général, 1 Oct. 1845: APM/ONC, 26a; Leconte to Min., 31 Mar. 1847: ANOM, Carton 40, CG 1847-8; Leconte 1847b:836, 849.

19

Bérard to Min., 1 Aug. 1846: ANM, BB4 1011; Leconte to Min., 31 Mar. 1847: ANOM, Carton 40, CG 1847-8.

20

See above, p.52.

21

Verguet 1861:259.

Tindin, however, became a notorious cannibal, an avowed enemy of the mission and its followers:

... [il y a] un chef de tribu qui se distinguait entre tous les autres par sa ferocité. Il se nommait Tindine. L'autre jour ... je frémis en voyant des membres humains que ce monstre avait fait suspendre à des piquets en signe de Tabou Ce tigre enlevait à nos néophytes [sic] les vêtements que nous leur avions donnés, et il menaçait d'égorger ceux qui lui résistaient. Un dernier crime devait mettre le comble à la mesure; c'est le massacre de cinq personnes qui ait été ensuite rôties et mangées.

22

Missionary accounts of his actions were couched in such shocked and emotional language that it is difficult to determine the reaction he evoked amongst the local people. It seems likely, however, that his own tribe regarded his behaviour as unnatural, and that it caused unrest and intra-tribal conflict.²³

Gwa and Tindin both died during the epidemic of 1846-7, in which the Mwelebeng, like surrounding tribes, suffered severe losses.²⁴ The tribe again came under the control of a 'regent', Gwa's eldest son, Bonu. Although he was subsequently referred to by Europeans as the 'second chief' of Pwebo, he ran the tribe until his exile to the Isle of Pines by Guillain in 1866.²⁵

22

Rougeyron to Supérieur-général, 14 Feb. 1847: APM/ONC, 26a; see above, pp. 94-6.

23

Rougeyron, 'Abrégé de la vie de Hippolyte Bonou': AVNC; Leconte 1847b:849-50.

²⁴ Rougeyron to Supérieur-général, 14 Feb. 1847: APM/ONC, 26a; Leconte 1847b:869.

25

E.g., Testard to Min., 23 Apr. 1858: ANOM, Carton 42; Gagnière to his brother, 2 May 1866: APM/ONC, 26m.

Early in 1847 the Marists started a station at Pwebo, but the attempt was short-lived. After the abandonment of the Balad mission in July of that year the missionaries took refuge at Pwebo, where they remained in a virtual state of siege until their relief by the Brillante in August. Eye-witness accounts indicated that Bonu, together with almost all his tribe, harassed the missionaries during this period, and that he helped at least to plan a full-scale attack which the Mwelebeng made on the Brillante's landing party as it escorted the missionaries to the ship:

Naygoro, enfant de neuf ans ... et son frère Koine âgé de huit ans, sont venus le jour de notre départ m'avertir en secret que leur frère Renou, grand chef de Poebo, se disposait à nous trahir; c'était vrai; nous étions tous perdus sans l'avis providentiel de ces deux enfants.

26

Rougeyron claimed later in his biography of Bonu that the chief was already devoted to the mission in 1847, and that he had played no part in the opposition;²⁷ there seems no doubt, however, from Rougeyron's own correspondence, that Bonu was the effective leader of a hostile tribe. However questionable Bonu's activities may have been in 1847, it is certain that in August 1850 he went with Rougeyron to join

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Rougeyron to Supérieur-général, 13 Aug. 1847: APM/ONC, 26a; see also Verguet 1861:257-9, 261.

27

Rougeyron, 'Abrégé de la vie de Hippolyte Bonou': AVNC; see also Gagnière to his brother, 2 May 1866: APM/ONC, 26m.

his brothers in Futuna, where he was baptized with the name of Hippolyte.²⁸ Hippolyte Bonu was to remain a fervent Christian until his death in exile in September 1866.

ON their return from Futuna in January 1852 Bonu, his brothers and the other Pwebo Christians were welcomed with joy by their kinsmen, who were vastly impressed by the rich gifts sent by the Christians of Futuna. The missionaries were enthusiastically received as friends of the chief,²⁹ and, presumably, as emissaries from the land where such wealth originated. A chapel was built and Matthieu Gagnière re-opened the mission at Pwebo in December 1852. He was respected and obeyed, but spiritual progress was at first slow, as few members of the tribe desired to listen to the missionary or to abandon their old ways.³⁰ With the aid of several local catechists, however, more than one hundred people were prepared for baptism by March 1853.³¹ The ceremony duly took place, but towards the end an epidemic broke out at Pwebo. Douarre and Bonu's brothers died almost immediately, and the population of Pwebo, both Christian and

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Rougeyron to Supérieur-général, 10 June 1850: APF 1851, 23:387; Rougeyron, 'Biographie du R.P. Gagnière', 56-7: AVNC.

29

Rougeyron, 'Biographie du R.P. Gagnière', 75, 80: AVNC.

30

Ibid., 80, 82.

31

Montrouzier to his parents, 16 Mar. 1853: APM/Personal file (Montrouzier); Anon., 'Dates pour servir à la vie du R.P. Gagnères' [sic]: AVNC

pagan, was said to have been decimated within ten days.

In July Montrouzier reported:

Depuis plusieurs mois, une cruelle
épidémie sévit avec force parmi nos tribus;
en dix jours, elle a enlevé à Poébo un dixième
de la population.

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The reaction of the Mwelebeng to the epidemic was similar to that of the Puma. In both tribes the elders were at the best of times suspicious of the new religion, they resisted missionary influence and refused to abandon traditional customs and values. But during crises, for which the missionaries were usually blamed, the hostility of the traditionalists became overt, and was shared, to some extent at least, by all but committed Christians.³³ The 1853 epidemic and the death and suffering which it occasioned was such a crisis, and it led to the emergence of a clear division in the Mwelebeng tribe between the supporters of the mission, who almost all lived to the north-west of the Pwebo river, and the defenders of custom, who were scattered throughout the tribe, but were strongest in the south-eastern villages. The nominal high chief, Warebat, was reasonably well disposed towards Bonu and the

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Montrouzier to Supérieur-général, 3 July 1853: APM/ONC, 26c.

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See above, pp.66-7; Gagnière to Supérieur-général, 18 Sept. 1853: APM/ONC, 21; Montrouzier to his brother, 14 Oct. 1853: APM/Personal file (Montrouzier); Rougeyron, 'Abrégé de la vie de Hippolyte Bonou'; 'Biographie du R.P. Gagnière', 95: AVNC.

missionaries, but he lacked energy and would not abandon polygamy because he believed that his prestige would suffer.³⁴ He was later won over by the conservatives, but intra-tribal dissension never seriously endangered the position of the missionaries at Pwebo, nor threatened the bases of their support. From an early date it seemed probable, despite opposition from within the tribe, that the mission would ultimately succeed unless extraordinary circumstances intervened.³⁵ The situation at Pwebo differed from that at Balad in three important respects. First, the religious division of the Mwelebeng did not correspond to traditional clan affiliations to the same extent as in the Puma tribe, and the Mwelebeng remained more or less united under the authority of the Tinjin chiefs, especially Bonu.

Second, Bonu, unlike Bweon, had a firm power base in the north-western villages. He was a devoted servant of the missionaries and his new religion, and yet he retained the respect of a large part of the tribe because of his personal qualities,³⁶ and despite the firmness with which he instituted the reforms that the missionaries deemed necessary.

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Gagnière to Supérieur-général, 18 Sept. 1853: APM/ONC, 21; Montrouzier to his brother, 14 Oct. 1853: APM/Personal file (Montrouzier).

35

Gagnière to Supérieur-général, 18 Sept. 1853: APM/ONC, 21; Forestier to Supérieur-général, 20 Sept. 1853: *ibid.*, 26c.

36

Tardy de Montravel commented, in reference to Bonu: '... la volonté du chef d'une tribu a d'autant plus de puissance sur la population, qu'il a su se faire craindre, estimer et respecter par une réelle supériorité' (Tardy de Montravel to Min., 25 Dec. 1854: ANOM, Carton 40, CG 1854).

Gagnière described how Bonu punished the theft of mission property and an attempted act of cannibalism:

Au premier vol nous avons fait brûler par
notre chef toutes les cases du coupable;
au second, quatre champs d'ignames ont payé;
quand [sic] à l'assassin ses jambes lui ont
sauvé la vie, et il ne s'est rapproché qu'
après quelques mois d'exile.

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During 1853 a bizarre episode occurred, which highlighted the extent of Bonu's prestige and the missionaries' influence at Pwebo. For some years numerous dogs had roamed about the tribe. They were treated as family members, to the extent that pups were suckled by the women of the tribe, and the death of a dog was an occasion for public mourning. Such sacrilege led the missionaries to suggest to Bonu that the dogs should be killed and used to supplement the protein-deficient local diet.³⁸ The inhabitants of the partly Christian western villages obeyed willingly, but the people of Pareman refused, and a brief civil war ensued. A compromise settlement was reached, but the south-eastern villages continued to be rebellious. They occasionally called on the chiefs of neighbouring tribes to aid them

37

Gagnière to Supérieur-général, 18 Sept. 1853: APM/ONC, 21.

38

Poupinel to Supérieur-général, 2 Dec. 1857: APF 1858, 30: 297-8; Rougeyron, 'Abrégé de la vie de Hippolyte Bonou': AVNC.

against the Christian chief, and at times fought in alliance with the enemies of the Mwelebeng.³⁹ Late in 1859 catechists were sent to the more northerly hamlets of Pareman, 'revêtus de la double autorité du R.P. Gagnière et de Hippolyte'.⁴⁰ They were well enough received, but by the middle of 1860 there were still no Christians in the western part of the tribe, and the more distant villages were 'presqu'encore à l'état sauvage'.⁴¹

The third way in which the situation at Pwebo differed from that at Balad lay in the character and ability of Gagnière, who won the affection and/or the respect of much of the tribe, young and old, pagans as well as Christians. His methods were revolutionary in the context of missionary endeavour in New Caledonia. He was a huge man,⁴² whose physical presence alone inspired respect and enhanced his influence. His evangelism relied in part on his ability to acquire a position of moral authority in the tribe, through his toughness, sternness, and utilization of the prestige of well-disposed chiefs; and in part on his common-sense and his consideration for the beliefs and sensibilities of the

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Gagnière to his brother, 2 May 1866: APM/ONC, 26m; J.M. Villard, 'Rapports sur les bienfaits et grâces reçus de la Très Sainte Vierge', 9 Sept. 1889: APM/ONC, 2a.

40

Rougeyron to Procureur, [October 1859]: APO.

41

Villard, 'Mémoire sur la catastrophe de Pouébo en 1867': AVNC.

42

Gagnière, biographical notes: APM/ONC, 14.

people whose conversion he sought, particularly the elders. The extent of his influence and his toughness were demonstrated above in the examples of punishments which he caused the chief to impose for infringements of the new moral code advocated by the missionaries. Milder forms of coercion were also used to encourage acceptable behaviour. If the inhabitants of a village displeased Gagnière he would refuse to buy their yams and taro, thus depriving them of tobacco. They would be told:

"C'est bien, un tel village est mauvais, il est Kanak nous n'achetterons [sic] pas ses taros et ses ignames quand il viendra vendre: il n'aura plus de tabac pour fumer". Le rendant ainsi caution les uns pour les autres ils se font la correction les uns aux autres.

43

Implicit in all these examples was the missionary's unquestioning acceptance of his right, in fact his duty, to direct Melanesians in temporal as well as spiritual matters, and he recognized no dichotomy or contradiction between the two aspects of his work. At Yengen, of course, such coercive tactics would only have angered and alienated

 43

Gagnière to Supérieur-général, 18 Sept. 1853: APM/ONC, 21. See also Gagnière to Procureur, 1 May 1859: APO, in which he described how he circumvented the threatened self-exile of several people who objected to the enforced Christianization of traditional ceremonies: 'j'ai déclaré en public la confiscation future des propriétés en faveur des deux chefs, si 'expatriation avait eu lieu'.

the local inhabitants, whose regular relations with European traders freed them from dependence on the missionaries for supplies of goods of European manufacture. But few traders frequented Pwebo before 1860, and in such circumstances the threat of deprivation of tobacco, to which New Caledonians quickly became addicted once European contact had been established, was indeed serious.

Many missionaries in New Caledonia were able, through the strength of their personalities and with the support of well-disposed chiefs, to acquire considerable influence and authority over their proselytes, but few had Gagnière's success in developing convinced, dedicated Christians, who had achieved a workable compromise between traditional beliefs and the demands of the new religion. Gagnière insisted that traditional beliefs and magic should not be dismissed as mere superstition and fetishism, to be sloughed off as immoral and irrelevant before Christianity was embraced. He pointed out that it was invalid to assume that conversion implied a sincere and comprehensive renunciation of customary beliefs. A person who renounced paganism retained as many of its practices as his conscience allowed, because he would rather accept two religions than abandon his original one:

C'est sa religion et il veut plutôt accepter deux religions que de renoncer à celle qu'il a déjà: c'est le parti qui lui paraît le plus sûr... il s'agit de leur foi, de leur culte, de leur conscience.

44

⁴⁴Gagnière to Procureur, 1 May 1859: APO.

The missionary who ignored this deluded himself. Gagnière aimed to make true Christians of Melanesians without first demanding complete renunciation of existing supernatural beliefs. He tried to indicate to his followers the relationship between some of their ancient ceremonies and practices and the patriarchal religion of the Old Testament. He justified their conversion to Christianity in terms of the replacement of these practices, which may have been valid before their enlightenment, by better ones. He contested Montrouzier's claim that a missionary must justify conversion entirely in terms of God's will and God's authority, which demanded absolute abandonment of pre-existing beliefs and practices. Gagnière insisted that it was tactless, obtuse and self-defeating for a missionary to deny without explanation the entire supernatural framework which supported and sanctioned traditional beliefs. Such a denial destroyed the missionary's authority and discredited the authority of God, since Melanesians interpreted the latter in terms of the former. Gagnière aimed to adapt and transform traditional festivals, practices and concepts into simple Christian ceremonies and ritual, in order that his followers should better understand the implications of conversion, and not be faced with a traumatic break with the past. Before this method could be applied the missionary had to acquire a profound knowledge and understanding of Melanesian beliefs,

practices and psychology, and Gagnière himself devoted much time and intellectual effort to this study. The results were to be seen in the eagerness with which his teachings were heard and accepted, especially at Pwebo, Arama and Bonde, and in the respect and admiration which he evoked amongst pagans as well as committed Christians.⁴⁵

AFTER the annexation of New Caledonia in September 1853 Bonu and Warebat were among the first chiefs to recognize French sovereignty and pledge support for and obedience to the colonial regime.⁴⁶ They were granted a code of laws similar to that received by Bweon of Puma. In 1854

45

The scope and depth of Gagnière's understanding of and empathy with Melanesian beliefs and modes of thought were demonstrated in his admirable monograph Etude ethnologique sur la religion des Néo-Calédoniens (St-Louis 1905). Of the Catholic missionaries in New Caledonia in the nineteenth century only Lambert, who became a disciple of Gagnière's methods and attitudes, managed to transcend his European and Catholic prejudices to anything like the same extent (Lambert 1900:27; Gagnière to Procureur, 25 Feb., 12 May 1861: APO). Gagnière's missionary creed was expounded most fully in letters of 1 May 1859 and 12 May 1861 (APO). See also Villard to Procureur, 16 May 1859; Gagnière to Procureur, 3 Dec. 1859, 12 May 1860, 25 Feb. 1861: APO.

Gagnière died at Pwebo after a short illness on 29 August 1867, a little more than a month before the uprising of part of the Mwelebeng tribe on the night of 6-7 October. It is not unlikely that his restraining influence would have prevented bloodshed. Rougeyron, for one, believed that 'le besoin de ce Missionnaire' was a factor of some importance in the October events (Rougeyron to ? , 30 Nov. 1867: APM/ONC, 22).

46

'Reconnaissance et acceptation de la Souveraineté de S.M. Napoléon III par Uarebat et Hippolyte, Chefs de la tribu de Muélébé', 15 Feb. 1854: ANOM, Carton 67.

Tardy de Montravel reported that the Mwelebeng, as a tribe, were 'plus indépendants et plus jaloux de leur liberté' than the Puma, but that individually they were 'plus esclaves du principe de soumission à l'autorité ... [du] chef effectif actuel, Hippolyte'.⁴⁷ He regarded the second trait as an invaluable means to manage the tribe, by direction and manipulation of Bonu. This would only apply, however, as long as administration and mission remained in essential agreement, since Bonu's first allegiance was to his religion and its local representatives.

That Bonu's authority was less absolute than the missionaries, de Montravel and presumably Bonu himself would have liked to believe is suggested by the continued dissension in the tribe, and the appearance of an open rift in 1855. Suspicion of French pretensions and resentment at the missionaries' blatant attempt by means of the code to reinforce and extend Bonu's authority at the expense of Warebat⁴⁸ exacerbated the already burgeoning hostility of the conservatives towards the mission, and by extension towards the French. Lambert recorded a parable which gained currency throughout the north at about this time, and which reflected the anger provoked by Bonu's

47

Tardy de Montravel to Min., 25 Dec. 1854: ANOM, Carton 40, CG 1854.

48

Cf. Puma, see below, p.

enhanced position and the intrigues of the Marists.⁴⁹ It depicted the conflicts which occurred in the Arama tribe as a result of the sudden acquisition of great wealth and power by the mweau ('younger brother', i.e. Bonu), who threatened to eclipse the teama ('great son', i.e. Warebat). The mweau owed his rise to the machinations of two powerful genies, who represented the missionaries. Despite supernatural assistance, however, the upstart finally came to a sad end. The parable was intended to demonstrate the folly of attempting, even with powerful allies, to infringe time-honoured custom. In a curious way the prophecy was eventually fulfilled, since disaster did overtake Bonu as a result of his association with the missionaries, and his aspiration to greater power than that to which he was entitled traditionally. Ironically, however, his fate was determined not by his own people, but by Guillain, whose motives were far removed from those expressed in the allegory.

Early in 1855 du Bouzet reported that about 17% of the Mwelebeng population was Christian, but that the tribe was restless, and could be counted on less than the Puma. Chiefly authority had been diminished by the suppression of cannibalism and murder as means of repression, and the code was ignored.⁵⁰

49

Lambert to Poupinel, [1860]: APM/ONC, 21.

50

Du Bouzet to Min., 14 Feb. 1855a: ANOM, Carton 40, CG 1855.

*(enclosed in Lambert
to Poupinel, 5 Nov. 1859, APO)*

Within four months Warebat had thrown in his lot with the dissidents,⁵¹ and ordered the Mwelebeng Christians to recant. With a few exceptions they refused, and some persecution ensued. Bonu's influence was generally sufficient however, to avert the open use of violence against them.⁵² The agitation of the pagans gained added fuel from the high death rate amongst the Christians, especially those who had returned from Futuna, and a widespread belief existed that:

... nous [les missionnaires] n'étions chez eux que pour les faire mourrir et pour les rendre encore malheureux dans l'autre monde (la plupart de nos chrétiens de balaḡ venus de futuna sont morts, tandis que les païens sont brillants de santé).

53

The low point of missionary fortunes within the Mwelebeng tribe occurred during the last half of 1855. Subsequently the involvement of the Pwebo Christians in traditional inter-tribal conflicts, and the enmity of pagan coalitions towards the Mwelebeng seemed likely from time to time to cause the collapse of the mission, but external pressures finally united the whole tribe behind Bonu and the missionaries, and were responsible in no small measure for its eventual conversion.

During 1856 the Mwelebeng were more than once attacked by the Yengen and by a pagan coalition led by Bwarat. That

51

Du Bouzet to Min., 10 June 1855: ANOM, Carton 40, CG 1855.

52

Du Bouzet to abbé de Meydat, 26 June 1855: APF 1856, 28:380.

53

Rougeyron to Supérieur-général, 28 Dec. 1855: APM/ONC, 5d.

chief's traditional enmity towards the Mwelebeng was extended to the Marists, for whom in any case he bore no love, and who actively aided the cause of his enemies.⁵⁴ Warebat helped the pagans, but they were unable to achieve a decisive victory, and the inability of the coalition to press home its numerical advantage helped the cause of Christianity.⁵⁵ Warebat's coldness continued, but his lack of authority within the tribe negated much of the effect of his opposition:

Poébo ... [est] soumise, quoique le premier chef nous soit hostile; mais il est nul, le 2^e chef qui a toute l'influence est avec nous ...

56

Bwarat was arrested as a result of his uncompromising animosity towards the Mwelebeng and the missionaries, and his tribe was devastated in 1859. Apart from the burning of the Pwebo church late in 1858, however, the enemies of the Mwelebeng contented themselves with plots and an occasional murder, and open warfare did not again break out until the end of 1859. At this time Kawa's pagan coalition, determined to avenge Bwarat and the Yengen, hurled itself upon the Mwelebeng and their pagan allies from Bonde and Balad. After initial set-

 54

See above, pp. 111-12.

55

Rougeyron to Supérieur-général, [1856]: APM/ONC, 5d.

56

Testard to Min., 23 Apr. 1858: ANOM, Carton 42.

backs, when some of the people of Pareman took refuge at Pwebo,⁵⁷ while the most south-easterly villages crossed to the enemy, the war resulted in a crushing victory for the Mwelebeng.⁵⁸

The means by which this result was attained are worth closer examination. During a lull after the initial attacks Villard organized the Christians into a small army with about thirty muskets at its disposal.⁵⁹ About 80 men drilled daily for three months under Bonu, who carried a sabre and wore a sash and a general's hat.⁶⁰ Villard described with enthusiasm the élan of his small troop as they learned to adapt their traditional talent for warlike pursuits to a new type of military skill:

Je me rappelai ce que j'avais appris, et depuis le Garde à vous, jusqu'à quoi ... tous les mouvements, charge à 13 temps, à 4 temps, à volonté, petite guerre, tirailleur, feu de peleton, feu de file, le tir. Mes soldats maniaient le fusil comme une cass-tête [sic].

61

57

Mathieu, 'Rapport ... au sujet de la formation de la tribu de Tchambouène ...', 6 July 1869: Mon., 5 Sept. 1869.

58

See above, pp.130, 132-3.

59

Villard, 'Rapports sur les bienfaits et grâces...', 9 Sept. 1889: APM/ONC, 2a.

60

Villard to Procureur, 13 May 1860: APO.

61

Villard, 'Rapports sur les bienfaits et grâces...', 9 Sept. 1889: APM/ONC, 2a.

The invaders were finally routed on 29 April 1860, and the Mwelebeng went on the offensive, in order, according to Villard, to avenge 'l'honneur de la religion'⁶²; a more cynical observer might discern less pure motives as far as a majority of the crusaders were concerned. The rebellious coastal villages were punished, and Bonu led his warriors to Pambwa, where 'tout fut brûlé, pillé, quelques morts, le reste prend la fuite, abandonne la tribu'. The Mwelebeng then advanced 'la pipe à la bouche, brûlent, pillent', along the coast to Tao, and then inland to attack the Tea Janu in their mountain strongholds, and put their land to the torch. Finally the Yengen in their turn were vanquished and the defeated tribes sued for peace.⁶³ Allies and former enemies alike called upon Bonu to procure them missionaries, and the entire Mwelebeng tribe, including Warebat and the recalcitrant people of Pareman, succumbed to the reality of military success and united behind Bonu in a burst of patriotic fervour.⁶⁴ It is important to note that the war

62

Villard to Procureur, 16 Aug. 1860: APO.

63

Ibid.; Villard, 'Rapports sur les bienfaits et grâces...', 9 Sept. 1889: APM/ONC, 2a.

64

Ibid.; Villard to Procureur, 6 Sept. 1869: APO.

and military victory provided a means by which the previously nominal authority of the Tinjin chiefs over the south-eastern clans could be transformed into autocratic control. According to Mathieu the refugees who returned to Pareman were told by Bonu where to re-establish their villages, and were punished if they disobeyed. The small independent tribe of Jawe (Waap where Mwelebeng was Oot) was annexed by the Mwelebeng, despite traditional ties with Yengen.⁶⁵ Thus the flexibility and equality of customary inter-clan relationships were lost, and a loose and more or less voluntary grouping of clans became rigid and compulsory.

From 1860 the influence of the Mwelebeng was felt throughout much of the north-east, and missionary prestige reached a previously unknown peak:

Aujourd'hui Pouébo domine partout dans le Nord, comme l'île des Pins dans le Sud. La religion est en honneur et partout on nous demande.

66

Catechists went to the most distant hamlets of the Mwelebeng tribe, and children from as far away as Webia were

65

Mathieu, 'Rapport... au sujet de la formation de la tribu de Tchambouène ...', 6 July 1869: Mon., 5 Sept. 1869; 'Rapport ... au sujet de la formation de la tribu de Diaoué', 8 Dec. 1869: Mon., 6-13 Mar. 1870.

66. Rougeyron to Procureur, 23 Oct. 1862: APO; see also Rougeyron to Procureur, 12 July 1860: APO; Rougeyron, 'Notes sur les diverses missions de la Calédonie et les Iles Loyalty', 18 Nov. 1861: APM/ONC, 20; Villard, 'Mémoire sur la catastrophe de Pouébo en 1867': AVNC.

called to Pwebo to be trained for this role.⁶⁷ In September 1860 Gagnière left Pwebo to found a mission at Arama,⁶⁸ and two years later, in response to reiterated chiefly demands, he started a station at Bonde.⁶⁹ By early 1863 most of the Mwelebeng and the Arama had been baptized, the youth of Bonde were well-disposed, the Maluma and the Tea Janu awaited catechists, while the people of Kumak, Gomen and Yengen received instruction from catechists sent from Conception.⁷⁰

Some Marists had few illusions about the reasons behind this sudden widespread enthusiasm for Christianity. In reference to the Paak of Bonde, Forestier commented:

... devenir plus attaché à Pouébo est d'avoir des protecteurs puissants contre les tribus païennes, leur ennemis communes.

71

67

During 1862 Villard sent for ('fis appeler') the chiefs of the tribes or villages of Puma, Tande, Pwalu, Maluma and Tea Janu and proposed that they should provide children 'pour ... être instruits de la Religion et de la civilisation chrétienne, afin que plus tard, ces enfants pussent porter le flambeau de la foi et de la civilisation chrétienne au milieu des leurs'. By August 1862 there were 49 children from these tribes at Pwebo receiving instruction (Villard to Rougeyron, [Report on the events at Pwebo], 7-16 Nov. 1867: APM/ONC, 22. See also Villard, 'Mémoire sur la catastrophe de Pouébo en 1867': AVNC).

68

[Forestier], 'Rapport sur la Nouvelle-Calédonie en 1860 et 1861', n.d.: APM/ONC, 19.

69

Gagnière to Procureur, 2 Aug. 1862: APO.

70

Ibid.; Rougeyron to Procureur, 23 Oct. 1862: APO; Forestier to Poupinel, 4 Dec. 1862: APM/ONC, 19; Villard, 'Mémoire sur la catastrophe de Pouébo en 1867': AVNC.

71

[Forestier], 'Rapport sur la Nouvelle-Calédonie en 1860 et 1861', n.d.: APM/ONC, 19.

Nonetheless the movement was seen as a breakthrough and the missionaries were exultant. Only experience was to prove the insufficiency of such motives as a basis for genuine and lasting conversion, since many of these new converts and proselytes were to succumb to the threats or blandishments of Guillain and his henchmen, and abandon the new practices for older ones which were more acceptable to the civil authorities.⁷²

EARLY in 1856 it was reported that the Catholics of Pwebo, encouraged by their missionaries, had begun to produce small quantities of coconut oil and bêche-de-mer, which they sold to passing coastal shippers.⁷³ Such undertakings, at Pwebo and Belep, remained on a very small scale until the early 1860's, when a coconut oil plant was set up at Arama, under the control of the chief and with the advice of the local missionary, Jérôme Guitta. Most of the tribe contributed their coconuts and their labour, and the proceeds were used in a common fund to procure clothes, tobacco and a few simple items of European manufacture.⁷⁴

72

See below, pp. 238-9, 244-5.

73

Laurent to Min., 13 Jan. 1857: ANOM, Carton 42; Montrouzier 1860:41-2.

74

Rougeyron to Procureur, 23 Oct. 1862: APO; Thiercelin 1866, I:279-80, 288, 305-6.

After the Mwelebeng victory in 1860 Villard began to organize the tribe to provide the materials and finance for the building of a stone church at Pwebo. A severe measles epidemic, which lasted from early December 1860 until the beginning of February 1861, caused many deaths, and resulted in a temporary suspension of the work and the break-up of Villard's militia. Work on the church began again in earnest after the epidemic.⁷⁵ Lieutenant Commander Adolphe Mathieu, later to be Guillain's chief-of-staff and renowned for his animosity towards the Marists, visited Pwebo in 1861, and reported in admiring tones on the industry of the tribe, and the great influence wielded over it by Villard. He described how the inhabitants of the various villages made coconut oil, the profits from which were divided into three portions: one part was used to pay the European workmen engaged on the church; the second to provide clothing for the people who had fled Pwebo during the war, and wished to become part of the tribe; the third was given to the chiefs of the various villages in proportion to the oil produced, and was divided among the workers.

75

Mathieu to Durand, 22 July 1861: ANOM, Carton 42; Villard, 'Mémoire sur la catastrophe de Pouébo en 1867': AVNC.

Cette bonne oeuvre et l'augmentation des indigènes autour de notre missionnaire prouve une fois de plus l'influence qu'exerce le Père Villars sur les populations qui lui sont confiées et qu'il dirige si bon. Il est en effet remarquable de voir avec quel empressement hommes, femmes et enfants, accourent à sa voix, obéissant au moindre de ses gestes; ils sont payés en retour par le zèle et le dévouement avec lesquels leur Père s'occupe de leurs intérêts moraux et matériels.

76

By late 1861 Villard, through his own prestige and the authority of Bonu, had regimented the life of the entire tribe around the task of constructing the church. Each village worked one week in four, without payment, and more than sixty men contributed their labour each day.⁷⁷ Early in 1864 work on the church was suspended, in part at least because Guillain's hostility towards the Marists had begun to focus on their position at Pwebo and their diversion of Melanesian labour to further the cause of Christianity in the area.⁷⁸

The extent of Villard's authority over the Mwelebeng provoked comment from most visitors, both lay and missionary,⁷⁹

76

Mathieu to Durand, 22 July 1861: ANOM, Carton 42.

77

Forestier to Procureur, 7 Aug. 1861; Villard to Procureur, [1861]: APO.

78

Villard, 'Mémoire sur la catastrophe de Pouébo en 1867': AVNC.

79

Mathieu to Durand, 22 July 1861: ANOM, Carton 42; Forestier to Procureur, 7 Aug. 1861: APO; Bourgey 1864:157.

Although he supported Gagnière's methods,⁸⁰ Villard's position depended more on his energy and stubbornness, and the great prestige acquired during the war of 1859-60, than on the subtle means of persuasion, based on a profound understanding of New Caledonian culture, beliefs and motivations, which Gagnière applied. Late in 1863 Rougeyron provided a clue to the traits of character which Guillain found intolerable in Villard, and which caused him eventually to become the main individual target of the governor's anti-clericalism: 'il [Villard] tient trop à imposer ses volontés et y est trop entier'.⁸¹

On Guillain's first visit to Pwebo in June 1863 his relations with the chiefs and the missionary seemed, on the surface, to be good.⁸² Yet the Marists claimed that on his return to Port-de-France he accused them of being more powerful than he in New Caledonia, of ruling like 'petits rois', and of exercising more authority than tribal chiefs.⁸³ The discovery of gold in the mountains behind Pwebo gave Guillain a pretext to establish a police post at Pwebo. The maintenance of the post even after the expectation

80

Villard to Procureur, 16 May 1859: APO.

81

Rougeyron to Supérieur-général, 21 Oct. 1863: APM/ONC, 20.

82

Bourgey 1864:157, 159; Villard, 'Mémoire sur la catastrophe de Pouébo en 1867': AVNC.

83

Rougeyron to Procureur, 16 June 1863: APO.

of large gold deposits had proved ephemeral suggests that it was intended mainly to supervise the activities of the missionaries.⁸⁴ For a while Villard enjoyed good relations with the gendarmes. Guillain's animosity did not diminish, however, and late in 1863 a squabble developed over the ownership of the Pwebo church and land claimed by the mission in the area.⁸⁵ Bickering over the extent of mission land-holdings in the north continued throughout Guillain's term of office, and although the Marists were not actually forced to abandon any of their main properties, the matter was not finally settled until after Guillain's departure from the colony.⁸⁶

According to Villard mission/government relations at Pwebo began to deteriorate noticeably at the beginning

84

'Décision du Gouverneur créant à Pouébo... un poste de police occupé par la Gendarmerie', 17 Oct. 1863: BO 1863:240; Rougeyron to Procureur, 17 Nov. 1863, 24 Mar. 1864: APO.

85

Forestier to Procureur, 7 Nov. 1863; Rougeyron to Procureur, 17 Nov. 1863, 17 Jan. 1864: APO.

86

Conseil d'administration, 21 Oct. 1864: ANOM, Carton 88; 3 Feb. 1866: ANOM, Carton 89; Bailly to Bonu, 1 Jan. 1866: APM/ONC, 25; Rougeyron to Guillain, 12 Jan. 1866: *ibid.*, 11; 'arrêté ... énumérant les propriétés reconnues à la Mission mariste au nord de la ligne reliant U araï à Canala, 1 May 1872: BO 1872:199-200.

of 1864.⁸⁷ At the core of the conflict were the general questions of missionary influence over the Mwelebeng and neighbouring tribes,⁸⁸ and the refusal of the Marists to submit their movements and their activities to the control and supervision of the government. Guillain set himself to destroy Bonu's influence. By superimposing a rigid Europeanized system of succession upon an essentially flexible traditional institution, the administration was able to question the legitimacy of Bonu's position in terms of the higher status of Warebat, for whom he had acted as 'regent'. The missionaries themselves tacitly accepted this interpretation, since they always referred to Bonu as the 'second' chief of Mwelebeng, even though they insisted that he was the actual and effective ruler of the tribe: 'le premier chef de fait, mais le second en titre'.⁸⁹ Furthermore, in their anxiety to reinforce the authority of a Christian chief the missionaries helped in large measure to bring about a loss

87

Villard, 'Mémoire sur la catastrophe de Pouébo en 1867': AVNC.

88

'Que nous reproche-t-il, jamais autre chose que notre trop grande influence sur les naturels', (Rougeyron to Procureur, 17 Jan. 1864: APO).

89

Gagnière to his brother, 2 May 1866: APM/ONC, 26m; see also Rougeyron to Supérieur-général, 30 Nov. 1867: *ibid.*, 22 ('2^e chef de droit seulement de la tribu de Pouébo a été toujours de fait le premier par ses rares qualités').

of flexibility in the operation of the Mwelebeng chieftainship, the concentration of power in Bonu's hands, and a diminution in the importance of consultation in the formulation of tribal policy.

In August 1864, at a public ceremony in Port-de-France, to which the chiefs of most pacified tribes had been summoned, Guillain, it was said, praised the recently-repatriated Bwarat and Undo for their support of the government at the mission's expense. He also tried to alienate Warebat from Bonu and ordered the younger chief to supplant Bonu as the effective chief of Mwelebeng.⁹⁰ According to the missionary account, he castigated the Christian chiefs of Pwebo, Belep, Bonde and Arama for paying more attention to their missionaries than to the governor. He attempted to discredit the Marists in the eyes of these chiefs by impugning missionary motives, especially as regards education, the conscription of Melanesian labour and the alienation of tribal lands.⁹¹ Under the inspiration of the

90

Rougeyron to Forestier, 10 Dec. 1864: APM/ONC, 20.

⁹¹ [Villard], 'Paroles rapportées par les naturels de leur voyage à Port-de-France pour la fête du 15 août 1864': APM/ONC, 25. In the Moniteur account of proceedings (Mon., 21 Aug. 1864) Bwarat and Undo were praised for their usefulness as interpreters. All the chiefs were counselled to submit to Guillain's orders and implement his advice, '[les conseils] les plus désintéressés qui puissent leur être donnés'. The implications of this phrase would have been lost on few of the journal's readers.

governor's words, Bwarat promptly gave rein to his own prejudices and drove the catechists from Yengen, while Undo recalled the Puma children who had earlier been sent to Pwebo, and began to preach apostasy in neighbouring tribes.⁹²

Late in 1864 and in the first months of 1865 Undo and Gwa provoked the apostasy of one third of the Paak tribe (the village of Mwandin) and two thirds of the Arama. They used similar methods in both tribes. First they gained the support of a few intransigent and influential pagans, who helped them win over unwilling or fearful Christians, who in turn compelled their children to apostatize. Gagnière accused Bailly of complicity in these affairs, and maintained that both Bailly and the Balad chiefs acted on specific orders from Port-de-France: 'j'ai déclaré et prouvé qu'on demandait positivement une apostasie'. The missionaries were especially hostile at the governor's insistence that pagan parents be allowed the right to determine whether or not their children should be Christian.⁹³

92

Villard to Rougeyron, [Report on the events at Pwebo], 7-16 Nov. 1867: APM/ONC, 22.

93

Gagnière to Procureur, 3 May 1865: APO; see also Emprin to Procureur, 5 Mar. 1865: APO; Gagnière to Rougeyron, 10 Aug. 1865 (quoted in Rougeyron to ? , 30 Nov. 1867): APM/ONC, 22.

From this time onwards Villard, his colleagues at Pwebo and in surrounding tribes, and the Christian chiefs were in open conflict with the commandant of the police post, gendarmerie sergeant Théodore Bailly. Bailly claimed to be under orders from Port-de-France to supervise the missionaries' every activity.⁹⁴ He evidently took his duties seriously, since in 1868 the public prosecutor commented in the Tribunal criminel on Bailly's preoccupation with the most trivial details of the missionaries' conduct:

... la conduite et les moindres mouvements [des missionnaires] paraissaient faire l'objet de sa plus constante occupation et le thème de ses rapports les plus longs et les plus circonstanciés, adressés fréquemment au chef de la colonie.

95

Bailly's campaign against the missionaries relied on the cooperation of three groups of people, whose shared animosity towards the Marists was after 1864 translated into active opposition. The first group consisted on European colonists and petty traders, who had begun to settle in increasing numbers in the area. These men envied the Marists their extensive land holdings in the colony, and

94

Villard to Rougeyron, 4 Sept. 1865 (quoted in Rougeyron to ? , 30 Nov. 1867): APM/ONC, 22.

95

[Champestève], 'Affaire de Pouébo. Partie du réquisitoire du ministère public se rapportant à la mission', [8 May 1868]: APM/ONC, 25.

at Pwebo in particular, and resented the competition provided by Bonu and the Christians in the coconut oil trade. The second group consisted of a number of determinedly pagan and apostate members of the Puma and Mwelebeng tribes, including Undo and Gwa, who sided with the administration against the mission for reasons both of self-interest and conviction. The third group, which overlapped the second, consisted of several youthful Melanesian interpreters who had been trained at the government school at Port-de-France, where they had imbibed at least some of the anti-clericalism which dominated the administration's attitudes to the mission during Guillain's term of office.

Initially, confrontation between mission and government occurred over four main issues: the right of Melanesians to contribute their labour and part of the proceeds of their commerce to the mission: the right of the missionaries to send catechists at will to neighbouring tribes and villages; the right of missionaries and catechists to cut wood and build without official permission, which was rarely granted;⁹⁶ the right of

96

Bailly to Bonu, 1 Jan. 1866: APM/ONC, 25: 'Surtout ne vous laissez pas aller à couper du bois quel qu'il soit sur ce terrain [the mission property] ... Il en est de même pour tous les autres bois et terrains, du moment où vous voulez construire un bâtiment qui n'est pas exclusivement pour votre usage personnel'.

Melanesians from a wide area to congregate for religious purposes.⁹⁷ Later, the administration's decision to expropriate Mwelebeng tribal land for the benefit of European colonists aligned the protagonists in the open struggle which developed. The missionaries assumed the role of defenders of the Melanesians against the depredations of an arbitrary and tyrannical authority; the administration saw itself as the enlightened opponent of entrenched reactionary priests, who fought the spread of civilization and colonization in their own mercenary and unworthy interest. The impact and ramifications of the conflict on the mission-influenced peoples of the region was profound.

During 1865 the missionaries made further efforts to finance work on the church. The tribe in council agreed to pay a monthly subscription of two francs per head to meet expenses, while Bonu set up a coconut oil plant, and contributed part of the profits to the mission.⁹⁸ He traded for the tribe's coconuts in direct competition with local European traders, and acquired something of a regional

97

E.g., Villard to Rougeyron, 19 Apr. 1865 (quoted in Rougeyron to ? , 30 Nov. 1867): APM/ONC, 22: 'les chefs de Pouébo ... ne peuvent ni sortir de leur tribu, [ni] aller dans les villages éloignés de leur propre tribu sans une permission spéciale, or ces défenses ne regardent que nos chefs chrétiens de Pouébo'.

98

Guitta to Procureur, 9 July 1865: APO.

monopoly in the commodity, because of the excellent bargaining position he enjoyed as chief. The missionaries advised Bonu to sell all his oil through Pierre Déméné, who was said to offer a better deal than other traders.⁹⁹ Father Armand Emprin, the missionary at Bonde, believed that this factor was sufficient to explain the colonists' bitterness against his Pwebo confreres: 'Je crois que les Pères d'ici favorisent trop ouvertement Démenai: ce qui est cause de la lutte acharnée que le Brigadier et les autres colons leur font'.¹ In part as a result of traders' complaints, Guillain ordered Bonu to cease operations on such a large scale and to make oil only from his own coconuts.² Not only did the mission-sponsored enterprise provide unwelcome competition for European commerce, however, but the preoccupation of most Mwelebeng with their own industry conflicted seriously with the demands of administration and colonists for cheap Melanesian labour.³ The two franc sub-

99

Guitta to Bailly, 22 Jan. 1866 (encl. in Guitta to Rougeyron, 27 May 1866): APM/ONC, 25. It is perhaps not insignificant that the missionaries regarded Mme Déméné as 'assez bonne Chrétienne' (Rougeyron to Procureur, 3 Feb. 1867: APO).

1

Emprin to ? , 12 Feb. 1866: APM/ONC, 25.

2

Villard, 'Mémoire sur la catastrophe de Pouébo en 1867': AVNC.

3

Guillain accused the missionaries of claiming the exclusive use of the work force of the Mwelebeng tribe: see especially his address to the Conseil d'administration, 16 Feb. 1868 (transcript encl. in Guillain to Min., 8 Mar. 1868): ANOM, Carton 166.

scription had also to be abandoned to protect Bonu from the governor's wrath at the tribe's contribution to the upkeep of the mission. Late in 1865 Guillain paid two visits to Pwebo, severely criticized Bonu for his relationship with the missionaries, and threatened him with arrest and exile. He was forbidden to work for the missionaries or to seek their advice on other than spiritual matters.⁴

On the question of catechists neither side was prepared to compromise, as both recognized their importance to the missionary cause. To Rougeyron Melanesian catechists were more valuable than European missionaries in the early stages of evangelism, because of their profound empathy with their own people:

Pour préparer les populations au Christianisme ils [les catéchistes] feront plus, je crois, que les missionnaires, parcequ'ils ne connaissent qu'imparfaitement leurs usages, leurs langues, et de plus, ils sont blancs et les autres noirs, ils ne leur inspirent plus la même confiance. 5

An ambitious programme was devised for the creation of a central school at St-Louis, where young people from all over the vicariate (which included the New Hebrides) would be gathered to be given 'une éducation chrétienne solide', and

4

Villard to Rougeyron, 26 June 1866: APM/ONC, 22; Villard, 'Mémoire sur la catastrophe de Pouébo en 1867': AVNC.

5

Rougeyron to Procureur, 15 June 1860: APO.

trained as catechists and workers.⁶ Guillain inevitably opposed this programme for the very reason that it presupposed mission control of native education and of relations between Melanesians and Europeans, and an extension of missionary influence far beyond the purely ecclesiastical sphere to which he insisted it should be confined. He demanded that the training and despatch of catechists should be subject to strict government supervision and regulation.⁷ As early as June 1863 a catechist based at Yengen was arrested on the grounds that he had ordered the punishment of a member of the tribe who failed to attend regular worship. The catechist was interned without trial and remained incommunicado for several months, despite missionary fulmination against such harsh and unnatural punishment for a misdemeanour caused by a mere 'excès de zèle'.

Villard and Gagnière, with Rougeyron's support, insisted on their right to send catechists to any tribe or village where they were requested either by the chiefs or by a number of the inhabitants.⁸ In practice this meant

6

Forestier to Poupinel, 4 Dec. 1862: APM/ONC, 19.

7

Guillain, 'De la Mission Catholique en Calédonie...', 6 Apr. 1865: APM/ONC, 11; Guillain, 'Réponse à la note de M^r. le Provicaire Apostolique. (Texte des principes que la mission regarde comme certains)', May 1867: *ibid.*

8

Villard, 'Mémoire sur la catastrophe de Pouébo en 1867': AVNC; Rougeyron to Guillain, 12 Jan. 1866: APM/ONC, 11.

to any place and at any time that the missionaries saw fit, since it was fairly easy to elicit such a request. Despite the efforts of the government and its assistants the prestige of Bonu and the missionaries remained high until about the middle of 1866, when fear began to erode their support among all but their most committed followers. During 1865 Villard took the offensive and despatched catechists to Ubac, Yambe, Jawe, Wenop, Webia, Pambwa, Tande and Balad.⁹ The government struck back at the end of the year, when five catechists from Pambwa and Balad and those who worked at Gomen and Kumak under the auspices of Gagnière were arrested and taken in irons to Port-de-France. Others were driven from their villages.¹⁰ Those arrested were accused of catechizing in defiance of the wishes of tribal chiefs and of breaking a regulation against cutting wood without special permission. The missionaries had no doubt that religion was the real issue: 'c'est la religion qui est en jeu'. The catechist at Balad was said to have been told that he could remain at his post as long as he did not preach.¹¹ To Guillain, however, this issue was as much a matter of

9

Villard to Rougeyron, [Report on the events at Pwebo], 7-16 Nov. 1867: APM/ONC, 22.

10

Villard to Bailly, 29 Nov. 1865 (encl. in Guillain to Min., 8 Mar. 1868): ANOM, Carton 166; 'décisions du Gouverneur...', 29 Dec. 1865: Mon., 29 Dec. 1867; Rougeyron to Guillain, 12 Jan. 1866: APM/ONC, 11.

11

Rougeyron to Forestier, 30 Dec. 1865: APM/ONC, 20; see also Rougeyron to Procureur, 30 Dec. 1865: APO.

power as of religion. In practice his quarrel was with individuals and their, to him, intolerable pretensions to secular authority, as much as with the doctrines which they represented.

THE arrest of the catechists initiated an escalating process of repression, protest and further repression, which culminated in the violent upheavals of 1867 and 1868, and the wholesale reorganization of the north-eastern tribes which followed. On 26 November Jérôme Guitta, against Villard's wishes, read from the pulpit a highly emotive public protest in which he accused the administration of religious persecution:

Je proteste contre une procédure qui, pour le seul motif de la religion, met la liberté, l'honneur et la vie de nos indigènes à la merci de nos administrateurs ... Je finis cette protestation en souhaitant que, pour l'honneur de mon pays, l'histoire ne puisse compter aucun d'eux parmi les premiers martyrs de la Nouvelle-Calédonie.

12

It is difficult to assess the immediate relevance of the protest, which was read in French and was thus incomprehensible to the Melanesians present. The authorities' reaction was curiously muted. Not until after the massacres at Pwebo in

12

Guitta, 'Protestation publique contre l'arrestation de cinq de nos Catéchistes', 26 Nov. 1865: Mon., 29 Dec. 1867.

October 1867 was Guitta's action widely criticized as a cause of the uprising: 'la protestation du 26 novembre 1865... a été le précurseur des massacres du 6 octobre dernier'.¹³ It was then even suggested that he should be charged retrospectively over the protest.¹⁴ Villard's response to the arrest of the catechists was to send immediate replacements on his own authority, which further infuriated Guillain.

The arrests, and the activities of the gendarmes and their friends caused widespread fear and some apostasy among the more recent converts of the region.¹⁵ The people of Mwelebeng, however, remained firm in the face of increasing provocation until about the middle of 1866, when the inhabitants of Pareman began in large numbers to renounce their new religion. They were among the most recent converts in the tribe, but their apostasy was in response to more severe and concerted pressure than had been applied elsewhere. It was a result of one of the most basic Melanesian traumas - a fear of wholesale expropriation of ancestral lands, and the destruction of gardens and burial places by the unfenced herds of colonists.

13

Nepveur, address to the Tribunal criminel de Nouméa, 27 Dec. 1867: Mon., 29 Dec. 1867.

14

Conseil d'administration, 16 Feb. 1868 (transcript encl. in Guillain to Min., 8 Mar. 1868): ANOM, Carton 166.

15

Emprin to ? , 13 Jan. 1866: APM/ONG, 25; Gagnière to Martin (commandant of the Gendarmerie), 31 Mar. 1866: *ibid.*; Lambert to Rougeyron, 23 July 1866: *ibid.*, 20.

The first sale of land to a colonist at Pwebo occurred in December 1863, when a former Marist lay brother was granted twelve hectares (about thirty-two acres) at Cevit.¹⁶ In April 1864 another settler was allowed to purchase six hectares (fifteen acres) at Jawe, which he had previously occupied without official authorization.¹⁷ The first large concession was made in November 1865, when Andrew Henry was granted fifty hectares at Ubac (Oubatche), with the requirement that he indemnify any dispossessed Melanesians.¹⁸ None of these land grants can be considered unreasonable, and all were made more or less with the acquiescence of the Melanesian proprietors. Towards the end of 1865, however, the inhabitants of most of the land to the south-east of the Pwebo river as far as Yambe, and inland to the mountains (Pareman) were warned that they were to be expropriated to provide land for an expected influx of colonists. According to Villard, Bailly told Bonu that the re-settlement of these people was the chief's business: that they could go 'au niaouli [bush]' for all he cared.¹⁹

16

Conseil d'administration, 18 Dec. 1863: ANOM, Carton 88.

17

Ibid., 18 April 1864: ANOM, Carton 88.

18

Ibid., 28 Nov. 1865: ANOM, Carton 89.

19

They were to be paid 3 francs each for their huts and 15-20 francs for their land. Villard to Rougeyron, 26 June 1866: APM/ONC, 22; Villard, 'Mémoire sur la catastrophe de Pouébo en 1867': AVNC.

For Guillain the planned expropriation would serve a dual purpose. It would extend colonization to a region where there were as yet few settlers; it would demonstrate that temporal power was firmly and absolutely in the hands of the administration, despite the apparent authority of missionaries and Christian chiefs. Whatever the motives, however, it is difficult to ignore the brutal and arbitrary nature of the act. The administration's refusal to concern itself with the fate of the dispossessed, if true, is an ugly comment on the sincerity of Guillain's proclaimed concern for the well-being of Melanesians.²⁰ The reaction of the people of Pareman was one of consternation and bewilderment. Traditional ceremonies, especially the ancient funeral rituals which had been proscribed by the missionaries at Pwebo for more than a decade, reappeared in the south-eastern villages, despite Villard's energetic opposition. Bailly actively encouraged this trend, and the festivals were held under the aegis of the tricolour.²¹

In March 1866 Villard suggested a protest against the expropriations in the form of a petition. It bore the crosses of sixty-eight people, including Warebat, Bonu and most of the lesser chiefs of the tribe, and expressed the

20

See above, pp. 164, 192.

21

Villard, 'Mémoire sur la catastrophe de Pouébo en 1867':AVNC.

absolute refusal of the threatened clans to cede their lands unless they received adequate compensation elsewhere:

... nous ne voulons ni vendre ni céder nos terres, parceque nous les tenons de nos pères et de nos ancêtres; quant à nos cocotiers, ils sont nos vrais richesses, une partie de notre nourriture et l'unique moyen de nous procurer des vêtements. Donc nous vous déclarons que nous refusons absolument de laisser notre pays aux mains des colons, à moins que M^r. le Gouverneur ne nous donne à la place un autre pays qui lui soit équivalent.

22

Unfortunately for Villard there were irregularities in the recording of the names of the signatories, and many later claimed under interrogation not to have understood the implications of their action.²³ Thus at the first trial of the Pwebo suspects in December 1867 one of the defence counsels could claim:

... on leur [the Mwelebeng] a rédigé des pétitions et des protestations, qu'on leur a fait signer sans leur dire ce qu'elles contenaient, car il est maintenant un fait avéré au procès que tous les signataires de la pétition du 16 mars 1866, sauf toutefois les principaux chefs et les rédacteurs de cette protestation, ignoraient ce qu'elle contenait.

24

 22

['Protestation contre l'aliénation des terres à Pouébo'], 16 Mar. 1866: APM/ONC, 22.

23

Correspondence between Guillain and Villard, 13 Nov. 1867 (quoted in Villard to Rougeyron, 7-16 Nov. 1867): APM/ONC, 22; 'Interrogatoire des accusés', 17-20 Dec. 1867: Affaire de Pouébo. Tribunal criminel de Nouméa: 32-74.

24

Nepveur, address to the Tribunal criminel de Nouméa, 27 Dec. 1867: Mon., 29 Dec. 1867; see also Guillain, address to the Conseil d'administration, 16 Feb. 1868 (transcript encl. in Guillain to Min., 8 Mar. 1868): ANOM, Carton 166.

The administration and its supporters pointed to the petition as clear indication of the systematic opposition of the Marists to the spread of colonization to those areas where they were firmly entrenched, and of their determination to maintain their despotic authority over the Christians, whom they were said to manipulate to the pecuniary advantage of their order.²⁵ The missionaries understandably and justifiably denied this allegation, but it is impossible to ignore their ingrained mistrust of most laymen, or to avoid the conclusion that their motives in opposing the alienation of land to colonists at Pwebo were not entirely disinterested.

Guillain retaliated at once. In April he came in person to Pwebo to arrest Bonu and six catechists. The catechists were jailed for up to two weeks. According to their accusers they had cut wood without permission, had tried to prevent dances authorized by the gendarmes, and had generally attempted to exercise an authority which the governor denied they possessed.²⁶ The charges against Bonu were more serious. He was accused of having misused his

25

Le Boucher, Nepveur, addresses to the Tribunal criminel de Nouméa, 28 Dec. 1867: Mon., 5 Jan. 1868; Guillain to Min., 27 Aug. 1869: ANOM, Carton 166.

26

'Arrêté du Gouverneur...', 24 Apr. 1866: APM/ONC, 22.

authority, of having ignored persistent reprimands, and of having, under the influence of 'des suggestions intéressés et nuisibles aux intérêts généraux du pays', impugned the sense of justice of the administration and formally refused to allow colonists to settle at Pwebo. He was suspended as chief and exiled for a year to the Isle of Pinès²⁷ where he died less than five months later during an epidemic of respiratory sickness.²⁸

In their defence of Bonou and denunciation of the governor's actions the missionaries missed the vital point. They understood that the official attacks were an oblique means of striking at the mission, but since they could see only good in their own influence, they attributed Guillain's behaviour to ill-will and ungodliness alone, and saw their own position as that of virtue oppressed by evil.²⁹ And yet according to his lights Guillain was acting reasonably and justly. To him the influence of the Marists and that of their main disciples, Christian chiefs and catechists, was an obstacle which had to be removed if the administration was to

27

'Décision du Gouverneur suspendant l'indigène Bonou (Hippolyte) de ses fonctions de second chef de Pouébo', 24 Apr. 1866; 'décision du Gouverneur plaçant l'indigène Bonou (de Pouébo) en surveillance à l'île des Pins', 1 May 1866: Mon., 6 May 1866.

28

F. Palazzy, 'Journal de l'île des Pins', 16 July, 17 Aug., 4 Sept. 1867: APM/ONC, 2c.

29

Gagnière to Rougeyron, 12 May 1866: APM/ONC, 22; Villard to Rougeyron, 26 June 1866: *ibid.*; Rougeyron to Procureur, 3 June 1866: APO.

exercise full authority in the region and colonization to prosper.³⁰ Hence the zeal with which the administration encouraged a return to certain aspects of the traditional way of life and the abandonment of Christian accretions. To the settler community, and to a lesser, but still significant extent, the government, colonization presupposed the alienation of the best lands to Europeans and, eventually, the confinement of the Melanesian population to clearly delimited reserves:

A quoi bon l'occupation, si on ne prend aux indigènes une large part des terres improductives et le plus souvent en friche, pour les livrer à la culture et les mettre aux mains de ces laborieux colons qui les arrosent de leur sueur et parfois de leur sang?

31

Moreover the opening of the region to settlers was itself an excellent means of attacking the missionaries' position because it exposed Melanesians to contact with other Europeans, and demonstrated that the civil authorities alone counted in temporal matters.

In May 1866, according to Villard, Bailly ordered the people of Pareman, whose faith was already severely

30

Guillain to Min., 27 Aug. 1869: ANOM, Carton 166.

31

Mage, address to the Tribunal criminel de Nouméa, 27 Dec. 1867: Mon., 29 Dec. 1867; see also Guillain, address to the Conseil d'administration, 28 Feb. 1867: ANOM, Carton 90.

shaken, to apostatize.³² Catechists were harried and forbidden to proselytize, and under the influence of physical abuse and threats the Pareman clans succumbed almost to a man:

... toute la partie Est de l'Etablissement de la mission ... [a] été travaillé d'une manière indigne, soit par certains colons, soit par les émissaires du poste, soit même par quelques gendarmes. Enlever la ceinture aux chrétiens, arracher leurs croix, médailles; les menacer des fers s'ils venaient à l'Eglise. Des colons sont allés même, par dérision jusqu'à acheter ces objets religieux. Je ne puis pas dire à quelles vexations ces chrétiens qui n' étaient pas encore bien forts, ont été en jeu.

33

There is little doubt that they hoped, by obedience, to save their lands and perhaps acquire the favoured position enjoyed by such tribes as Yengen and Puma. Their subservience did them little good, however, and the rate of expropriation of Melanesian lands and settlement of colonists in the south-eastern part of the Mwlebeng tribe accelerated during the next year. Andrew Henry was sold more land in July 1866. He thus acquired in effect the entire area from Cambwen to Yambe and inland to the mountains, while his livestock created havoc in Melanesian gardens far beyond the limits of his own property.³⁴ On this occasion

32

Villard, 'Mémoire sur la catastrophe de Pouébo en 1867':AVNC.

33

Villard to Rougeyron, [Report on the events at Pwebo], 7-16 Nov. 1867: APM/ONC, 22; see also Emprin to Procureur, 24 June 1866: APO; Villard to Rougeyron, 3 July 1866: APM/ONC, 26m.

34

Villard, 'Mémoire sur la catastrophe de Pouébo en 1867': AVNC.

the original owners of the land were given some right of occupation for ten years.³⁵ By late 1867 several other settlers had taken up concessions. They included Pierre Déméné, at Bwaibat, and Delrieu-Bertrand, who ran a trading post on a small property west of the river, and was granted a further fifty-five hectares at Kabarik in 1867.³⁶ Déméné, Henry and Delrieu-Bertrand were the main civilian sufferers in the uprising of some of the people of Pareman in October 1867.

It should be noted, however, that apart from Henry the Marist mission was by far the largest European landowner in the Pwebo district in 1870. By their own count the missionaries held 174½ hectares, almost all good land.³⁷ The administration estimated the requirements of the Mwelebeng tribe (at a rate of 3 hectares per person) at about 4,500 hectares, and allowed for another 200 hectares claimed by the mission. It considered that the remaining arable land - about 4,300 hectares - should be opened up to

35

Conseil d'administration, 2 July 1866: ANOM, Carton 89. This provision was abrogated in July 1869 as being no longer relevant (Conseil d'administration, 17 July 1869: ANOM, Carton 91). In February 1870 Henry was granted a further 132 hectares at Ubac (Conseil d'administration, 1 Feb. 1870: ANOM, Carton 92).

36

Conseil d'administration, 28 Feb. 1867: ANOM, Carton 90; Villard, 'Mémoire sur la catastrophe de Pouébo en 1867': AVNC.

37

[Forestier], 'Propriétés et biens de la mission de la Nouvelle-Calédonie', 18 May 1860: APM/ONC, 3.

European colonization.³⁸ At the end of 1867 it was stated that only 360 hectares had been alienated to settlers.³⁹ This seems fairly accurate, since by my count (which does not include the grant to Pierre Dêméné, and may also omit one or two small concessions of which no record is extant) 331 hectares had at that time been ceded.

These figures were used to suggest that missionary complaints in 1866 and 1867 about the wholesale expropriation of the people of Pareman were deliberate misrepresentations:

Ne croyez pas, Messieurs, à ces dépossessions exagérées; ne croyez pas à cette prétendue privation descocotiers, seul moyen d'existence s'écriera-t-on, de ces misérables peuplades

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The protests certainly seem to have been exaggerated and somewhat premature. In fact, they aimed less to recover land already lost than to circumvent the threat of future dispossession. Immediate Melanesian grievances centred on ravages caused by unfenced livestock, and on the fact that concessions seemed to be deliberately sited to include villages and garden land:

38

Conseil d'administration, 28 Feb. 1867: ANOM, Carton 90.

39

Mage, address to the Tribunal criminel de Nouméa, 27 Dec. 1867: Mon., 29 Dec. 1867. The European population of the Pwebo circonscription in July 1869 was 54 - the largest centre of European settlement outside Nouméa ('Division de la population blanche par cultes et par nationalités', 1 July 1869: ANOM, Carton 172).

⁴⁰ Ibid.; see also Le Boucher's address to the tribunal, 28 Dec. 1867: Mon., 5 Jan. 1868.

Or actuellement à Oubath, nos sujets ont déjà tout leur terrain envahi par la dent des vaches, chevaux, ânes ... des Anglais ... [sic] (impossible, vous le savez, de faire une cloture de champs, vu le manque de bois et de permission d'en couper.) - A Tiambouéne, des cochons des colons, mis à dessein à l'état libre, rendent impossible la culture des ignames ...

Que sera-ce dans un prochain avenir, alors que les vaches et les chevaux se joindront aux cochons, soit à Tiambouéne, soit à Bouaiba, soit à Kabarik, soit à Chévite ... [sic] où les concessions semblent à dessein accordées sur l'emplacement même des villages ... et si bien intercallées, qu'il n'y ait plus moyen d'y avoir une seule plantation.

41

The administration specifically denied this allegation.⁴²

Despite the exile of Bonu and the apostasy of the people of Pareman, Guillain had only partially achieved his objective. With Bonu's demise the missionaries and the Christians united behind Warebat, the weak and previously despised 'first chief', in a rearguard attempt to defend the tribal lands and save the Tinjin theocracy.⁴³ In Warebat's name Villard wrote over the governor's head to Paris, and described in exaggerated terms the iniquities of

41

Warebat to Rougeyron, 1 May 1966 (translation): APM/ONC, 22.

42

Conseil d'administration, 28 Feb. 1867: ANOM, Carton 90.

43

Evidence of the gendarme Gacher, 23 Dec. 1867: Affaire de Pouébo. Tribunal criminel de Nouméa: 76-7: 'Napoléon [Warebat] passait dans le temps pour un imbécile et ne commandait rien. Hippolyte était intelligent. Depuis sa mort, Napoléon a pris les rênes du pouvoir et fréquente la Mission'.

the authorities with regard to Mwelebeng land.⁴⁴ Villard's action is a further instance of the missionaries' inability to comprehend the nature of Guillain's animosity, since one of his main grievances against the Marists was their persistent attempt to mediate between Melanesians and the administration. To Villard it was only logical that he should use every avenue open to him personally in the cause of his flock. To Guillain his actions were an unwarranted and disruptive interference in affairs which were none of his concern. In the letter Warebat offered to cede all the eastern portion of the tribal lands (which was already heavily settled by Europeans) on the sole condition that the tribe received full and legal title to the land between the Pwebo river and Balad. He guaranteed to resettle those dispossessed. This apparently generous offer concealed the fact that the Tinjin, the most staunch supporters of the mission, would retain their lands intact, while the

44

Warebat to Rougeyron, 1 May 1866: APM/ONC, 22. The letter claimed that a colonist, Lepeu, had been pressed by the administration to accept 500 hectares of the most densely populated Tinjin lands, although he had previously been refused permission to settle at Kanala, on the lands of pagan allies of the government, or in the Diahot valley, where almost no Melanesians lived. Guillain, however, claimed that Lepeu's request for a large concession at Pwebo had been denied as contrary to Melanesian and public interests; on this basis Guillain denounced Warebat's protest as fraudulent (Conseil d'administration, 16 Feb. 1868 [transcript encl. in Guillain to Min., 8 Mar. 1868]: ANOM, Carton 166). I have found no independent evidence against which to check these contradictory claims, but Guillain's argument seems to have rather more internal consistency.

people of Pareman, who had already begun to apostatize, would be entirely dispossessed and thrown on the mercy of Warebat, the Christians and the mission.

The proposal received a gratifying reception in Paris. A decree of 7 September 1866 forbade the expropriation of the designated section of the tribe's lands until further order, and ordered the return of those parts which had already been alienated.⁴⁵ Guillain was predictably disgusted at the directive, which he chose to interpret as a missionary plot to set up autonomous Melanesian colonies within the colony, and to limit European settlement to those areas where the mission had no interests. The Marists would certainly have appreciated such a state of affairs, but it is doubtful if by 1866 they still regarded it as attainable. In practice the governor seems to have ignored the decree,⁴⁶ while its immediate effect was to harden settlers' attitudes, to embitter Guillain still more against the Marists and the Mwelebeng, and to incline him to seize any opportunity to reduce them both to complete subservience.

45

Conseil d'administration, 28 Feb. 1867: ANOM, Carton 90; 'acte d'accusation', Tribunal criminel de Nouméa, 12 Dec. 1867: Mon., 15 Dec. 1867.

46

E.g., Delrieu-Bertrand's right to 5 hectares west of the Pwebo river was confirmed; a concession of 3 hectares to Lehuau was proposed in the same area, but he was eventually forced to settle at Cambwen.

The conflict over land and the settlement of colonists in the western part of the tribe came to a head in April 1867, when Warebat categorically refused an order to cede three hectares of his personal property. He submitted a further written protest, drawn up by Villard and Father André Chapuy: 'j'ai déclaré devant vous [Bailly] que je ne voulais en aucune manière concéder et aliéner cet héritage des chefs, mes ancêtres; j'ai donc protesté contre cette concession'.⁴⁷ To no avail, however, since the colonist, Lehuau, was given a provisional right to occupy the land. Lehuau was one of the few Europeans to escape unmolested from the massacre and pillage of 6-7 October 1867.

During 1867 several incidents occurred - thefts, insults and threats against colonists by men of Pareman - which Villard claimed were either ignored or treated lightly by Bailly. In mid-year a great traditional festival was held at Pwebo, attended by about 6,000 warriors from tribes as far away as Belep, Wagap and Gomen. The missionaries complained bitterly at what they saw as a reversion to barbarism, but Bailly insisted that the ceremony go on, and it passed without overt disturbance.⁴⁸ It was at

47

Warebat to Bailly, 4 Apr. 1867 (copy encl. in Guillain to Min., 2 Oct. 1868): ANOM, Carton 166.

48

Villard, 'Mémoire sur la catastrophe de Pouébo en 1867': AVNC.

this gathering that Warebat was supposed to have initiated the plot to kill the gendarmes and colonists of Pwebo by presenting a war club to his chosen assassin, a chief known as Martin, from the hamlet of Bwaibat.⁴⁹ On the night of 6-7 October 1867 the axe fell.

49

'Acte d'accusation', Tribunal criminel de Nouméa, 12 Dec. 1867: Mon., 15 Dec. 1867. The validity of this allegation is examined below, p.269.

CHAPTER VI

REACTION AND REPRESSION

PART I: PWEBO 1867-8

AT about 5.30 p.m. on 6 October 1867 seven men, led by the Bwaibat chief, 'Martin', ambushed and killed Bailly and another gendarme.¹ The murder weapons were European axes and New Caledonian clubs. The murderers all lived south-east of the Pwebo river and were either pagans or apostates. About two and a half hours later a mob broke into and looted Delrieu-Bertrand's store; an even larger crowd went on immediately to the Déméné homestead, where Déméné, his two youngest children and a Melanesian servant were slain, Mme Déméné and two other children left for dead, and the house and store thoroughly ransacked. Gathering reinforcements on the way, the band - by this time 250-300 strong - proceeded to Andrew Henry's property at Ubac. A man well known to the household called Henry's son from his bed, whereupon the boy was attacked and badly injured. The rest

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Mon., 21 Oct. 1867; 'acte d'accusation', Tribunal criminel de Nouméa, 12 Dec. 1867: Mon., 15 Dec. 1867.

of the household, aided by the Europeans, New Hebrideans and convicts in Henry's employ, managed to keep the assailants at bay, but much pillage and destruction was committed in his storehouses, three New Hebrideans and a Lifuan woman were killed and others were wounded.²

The rebels also suffered a major loss, as 'Martin' was killed at Ubac.³

Early the next morning, even before the full extent of the attacks was known, Warebat ordered the huts of the people of Bwaibat to be put to the torch,⁴ and later that day he sent his warriors to Ubac 'pour venger le massacre', where they were joined by the men of Balad. Hamlets and gardens as far south as Ubac were sacked, several men killed and a number of suspects arrested. On 10 October accusations were first made against Warebat, when Henry claimed that the chief and the Christians had had prior knowledge of the plot. Almost from the beginning

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Henry was granted his concession at Ubac (Oubatche) in part fulfilment of a contract with the administration for the importation into New Caledonia of New Hebridean indentured labour (Conseil d'administration, 1 May, 28 Nov. 1865: ANOM, Carton 89). Henry personally employed more than 100 New Hebrideans and several convicts. By 9 October 1867, after the return of some of his people from Yengen, Henry's establishment was about 150 strong (Mrs. E. Henry, letter, Mon., 21 Oct. 1867).

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Villard, 'Journal de Pouébo', 7 Oct. 1867: APM/ONC, 2d.

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Except where otherwise indicated, the following description of events is based on Villard, 'Journal de Pouébo', 7 Oct.-15 Nov. passim: APM/ONC, 2d; Villard to Rougeyron, [Report on the events at Pwebo], 7-16 Nov. 1867: *ibid.*, 22.

Henry refused to trust Warebat or to cooperate with Gacher, the remaining gendarme, in the defence of the Pwebo post. On 12 October nine soldiers from Wagap arrived at Ubac in response to Henry's call for help, but Henry would allow none to aid Gacher,⁵ who was forced to rely on Warebat and his men to defend the post and the mission against possible further attacks. Despite the delay in the arrival of adequate reinforcements, no more attacks occurred, although bands of insurgents were seen around the Henry property and occasionally at Pwebo itself.

For ten days the Tinjin warriors combed the surrounding countryside in search of suspects, and later accompanied official expeditions. Between 17 and 30 October troop reinforcements arrived from Gatop, Wagap and finally Nouméa. News of the uprising did not reach Nouméa until 19 October, and caused consternation. The difficulties imposed on the governor by insufficient forces are underlined by the fact that only luck enabled him to ship any troops at all from Nouméa: had the news reached him a few days later he would have had no vessels at his disposal.⁶ In the event,

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On Henry's apparently privileged position vis-à-vis the colonial administration, see below, pp. 288-90.

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Guillain to Min., 23 Oct. 1867: ANOM, Carton 166.

the fortunate presence of a visiting frigate and steam corvette enabled Guillain to assemble an imposing force at Pwebo of more than two hundred men of various services, and four warships, two of them only schooners. These troops were reinforced by about 600 Melanesian auxiliaries,⁷ led by the loyal allies of the government, Bwarat of Yengen, Aile of Wagap and Mango of Kone.⁸ Towards the end of the month Guillain went in person to Pwebo to supervise the repression and an official investigation into the affair.

The overwhelming strength of the French forces quickly stifled any thought of further resistance on the part of the rebels, if indeed it had existed after the death of their leader, 'Martin'.⁹ Those most directly implicated who had not already been captured fled to the mountains, where all but a few were either apprehended by the troops and their Melanesian allies or handed over by chiefs anxious to demonstrate their loyalty to the régime.

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Patouillet 1872:53; according to the captain of the Sibylle there were nearly 800 auxiliaries (Riou-Kerangal to Min., 29 Nov. 1867: ANM, BB4 871).

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Guillain to Min., 4 Dec. 1867: ANOM, Carton 166; Mage, address to the Tribunal criminel de Nouméa, 27 Dec. 1867: Mon., 29 Dec. 1867.

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Several missionaries claimed that the limited nature of the affair was proved by the rebels' general loss of enthusiasm after 'Martin's' death ([Frère A.Mallet], 'Nouvelle-Calédonie. Procédure criminelle. Massacre de 2 Gendarmes & plusieurs colons par les Indigènes à Pouébo. Extrait analytique': APM/ONC, 22; Rougeyron to Procureur, 4 Jan. 1868: APO).

The rest of the Mwelebeng tribe adopted an attitude of complete subservience, in reaction to official suspicion that the affair was not the isolated crime of a few discontented individuals, but part of a general plan of revolt, in which the entire tribe, and the chiefs in particular, were involved. Early in December Guillain wrote in this vein:

Des faits antérieurs et même des indices récents rendaient évidente ... une complicité générale dans les crimes commis, et ceux-ci ayant un caractère politique indéniable ...

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THE questions of the causes of the events of 6-7 October and the motives of the insurgents are vexed, mainly because they became inextricably involved with the tensions and jealousies of the mission/government conflict and its impact on the Mwelebeng. Predictably the administration and the Marists put forward totally opposed interpretations. The official version spoke in terms of a long-matured plot to drive all Europeans from the area, a plot inspired by missionary agitation and organized and put into motion by the Christian chiefs of Pwebo.¹¹ Conversely the

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Guillain to Min., 4 Dec. 1867: ANOM, Carton 166.

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Mage, Nepveur, Le Boucher, addresses to the Tribunal criminel de Nouméa, 27, 28 Dec. 1867: Mon., 29 Dec. 1867, 5 Jan. 1868; Guillain to Min., 8 Mar. 1868: ANOM, Carton 166.

missionaries exonerated themselves and Warebat by depicting a limited uprising confined to the apostate part of the tribe:

... un nommé Martin, chef du village où étaient les blancs et placés sur son terrain, a été le seul auteur de ce drame sanglant avec six ou sept individus de son caractère Ce Martin, à caractère vindicatif, avait été puni avec son frère, autre assassin, par le Chef de poste Bailly. Voilà donc la cause [du] guet-apens.

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When they came to elaborate long term causes the missionaries placed ultimate blame on the administration for its encouragement of paganism and the expropriation of the ancestral lands of the people of Pareman:

Ils étaient obligés à prendre la religion soldat, à marcher nus, à reprendre toutes leurs coutumes païennes. Puis on donne leurs terres à des blancs ... On les a forcés à être païens, ils ont agi comme païens, à qui la faute ?

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Rougeyron to Procureur, 4 Jan. 1868: APO; see also Villard to Rougeyron, [Report on the events at Pwebo], 7-16 Nov. 1867: APM/ONC, 22; summary of Dezarnaulds's address to the Tribunal criminel de Nouméa, 28 Dec. 1867, in Mallet, 'Extrait analytique': ibid.

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Poupinel, n.d. (fragment): APM/ONC, 22; see also Rougeyron to ? , 30 Nov. 1867: ibid.

A third viewpoint was offered in the bill of indictment (acte d'accusation) of the men charged over the affair.¹⁴ The author of this document, the public prosecutor (procureur impérial), Hyacinthe Champestève, attributed the uprising ultimately to Melanesian savagery: '... ces barbares, toujours avides de sang et dont les appétits féroces se réveillent au moment où on s'y attend le moins'.¹⁵ In the cultural attitudes which it reflected, this interpretation was as biased as either of the arguments cited above. It was, however, the only contemporary analysis which attributed Melanesian actions to anything other than European manipulation, and in this, despite its overtly racial bias, it was both more objective and more reasonable than either the mission or the government version. As such it provides a point of departure for an examination of the causes of the uprising and the motives of the insurgents.

Champestève, a recent arrival in the colony who had at once won missionary approval,¹⁶ had conducted the preliminary investigation at Pwebo. His bill of indictment

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'Acte d'accusation', Tribunal criminel de Nouméa, 12 Dec. 1867: Mon., 15 Dec. 1867.

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[Champestève], 'Affaire de Pouébo. Partie du réquisitoire du ministère public se rapportant à la mission', [8 May 1868]: APM/ONC, 25.

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Lambert to Procureur, 5 Oct. 1867: APO.

charged twenty-six persons in all: eight with premeditated murder; two with attempted murder; these ten and a further twelve with looting; five (including Warebat, his leading tribal adviser and one man already charged) with complicity in all the crimes cited and with having provoked the attacks. The bill stressed that charges had been laid against only a small number of those actually involved, because of lack of evidence and eye-witness reports. The accusations were mainly based on the confessions and mutual denunciations of the prisoners:

... les charges ...proviennent généralement d'aveux faits par eux [les accusés], soit spontanément, soit à la suite de confrontations.

In the bill Champestève examined the causes of the uprising in some detail. It seemed obvious to him that the assailants aimed primarily to kill all the Europeans settled at Pwebo. He saw plunder as a secondary consideration, since most of the looted goods, such as sails and straw hats, were items of little value to Melanesians. Although he was probably correct as far as the leaders were concerned, his reasoning suggests a limited understanding of human psychology in general and of the materially deprived in particular. In no society is utility always an accurate index of the desire of the underprivileged to appropriate the possessions of the wealthy. The fact that the stolen goods could not be used in the manner for which they were intended,

or that they were not previously in common use, is irrelevant because of the status bestowed by their seizure and because the act of pillage itself implies the redress of certain grievances. Furthermore, the looters also took many items, such as muskets, ammunition, knives, axes, pipes, tobacco and cloth, for which they had eminently practical uses, and which had their own value in the indigenous society. Thus, while wholesale murder of Europeans was almost certainly the goal of the leaders of the uprising, for the majority of those who gathered at Delrieu-Bertrand's, Dêméné's and Henry's properties the lure of plunder was a powerful distraction from the main business at hand. This may explain why Delrieu-Bertrand's overseer was allowed to escape while his would-be assassins struggled to break into the storehouse; why Mme Dêméné and her two small sons were left for dead instead of being summarily despatched; why the attack on the Henry's was not pressed with as much dedication as might have been expected. Again, these curious omissions may also indicate a lack of genuine enthusiasm for bloodshed on the part of most of the participants.

Champestève then went on to discount the possibility that the uprising was the result of 'aucun acte de vexation ou de brutalité commis par les Européens de Pouébo contre les naturels du pays'. He admitted that the two leaders, 'Martin' and 'Pierre' of Bwaibat had recently been sentenced to brief periods of forced labour by Bailly for minor misdemeanours, but considered it unthinkable that well-deserved chastisements

could have inspired such terrible vengeance. The logic of this presumption is explicable only in terms of the narrow cultural and social Europocentrism of a new arrival whose knowledge and understanding of the people against whom he was called to bring charges were limited. In fact, the punishment of a chief, especially for a minor dereliction, would have been regarded as humiliation both by the individual and his entire clan.¹⁷ Several of Bailly's assassins had been recently chastized on the commandant's orders, which no doubt helped dispose them to participate in the plot. Their crimes included having threatened Dêméné when he cut down coconut palms without their permission, and having spat in Mme Dêméné's face. These actions by the previous owners of Dêméné's block reflected the grievance which underlay the uprising - bitter resentment at the expropriation and sale to European settlers of tribal land to the south-east of the Pwebo river, and anger at the European assumption that the transfer of land titles encompassed the acquisition of everything, trees, streams, crops, which the land contained. It is worth repeating that it would seem to be no coincidence that Delrieu-Bertrand, Dêméné and Henry were the main civilian targets of attack

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Cf. [Champest ève], 'Partie du réquisitoire ... se rapportant à la mission', [8 May 1868]: APM/ONC, 25, in which he cited the punishments as sufficient explanation for the murderers' hatred of the gendarmes.

on the night in question, and that, whoever may ultimately have instigated the plot, its most enthusiastic executors were the Melanesian claimants to the land which these Europeans occupied.

Indeed, Champestève considered that 'l'unique et véritable raison' for the uprising was the insurgents' fear of further concessions of land, which would lead to their total dispossession. Cause but not justification in the prosecutor's eyes, since these people had been assured that no more land grants would be made before a definitive survey had determined what portion should be reserved for Melanesian needs:

... ils savaient très bien que de nouvelles concessions ne seraient plus faites chez eux, jusqu'à nouvel ordre du moins, c'est-à-dire jusqu'au moment où, après vérification définitive, il serait établi que partie des terres de leur circonscription, presque toujours en friche et beaucoup trop considérable pour leurs besoins, pourraient recevoir, sans les léser le moins du monde, et après qu'un lot proportionné au nombre des familles qui la composent aurait été distrait à leur profit, une destination plus utile à la colonisation.

Champestève did not explain why he believed that the people of Pareman should have given credence to the latest in a series of decrees guaranteeing the inviolability of the land they occupied,¹⁸ when by their reckoning the earlier

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See below, p

guarantees had not been honoured. He made no explicit mention at this stage of earlier expropriation as a possible motive, although in his address to the second Pwebo hearing in May 1868 he referred to previous concessions of land as the main cause of the violent Melanesian reaction.¹⁹

The bill of indictment stressed heavily the element of premeditation in the affair; the rapid increase in the numbers involved after the initial murders suggested to Champestève a well-organized, if cleverly dissimulated plot:

... pour réunir tant de monde autour de la maison Henry que l'on savait la mieux gardée, il a été nécessaire de se concerter d'avance et de fixer un plan d'attaque régulier.

In each of the three attacks on settlers' homesteads the same ruse was employed: an attempt was made to lure the first intended victim from the relative safety of his house by a person well known to him. Once the first victim had been despatched it was expected that entrance to the building would be gained easily in the resulting confusion. Only in Déméné's case did the attackers achieve their initial objective, but there is little doubt that the deliberate use of this method was correctly stressed in the

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[Champestève], 'Partie du réquisitoire ... se rapportant à la mission', [8 May 1868]: APM/ONC, 25.

indictment. With variations, it was a tactic commonly employed in traditional warfare in surprise attacks on enemy dwellings.²⁰ The use of this ruse suggested to Champestève a high degree of coordination at the planning level. In contrast to his friends the missionaries he regarded Warebat as 'la cause première de tout ce qui a été fait de mal'. He stressed that the evidence against Warebat and the leading men of the Tinjin clan was based purely on hearsay, but was of the opinion nonetheless that it was conclusive:

... il semble ... évident, d'après l'ensemble des faits et d'après la manière dont ils se sont accomplis, que leur participation ne saurait faire doute.

The specific charges and evidence against Warebat and his advisers will be examined more closely.²¹

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E.g., P.Goujon, 'Journal de l'île des Pins', 9 Nov. 1849; Patouillet 1872:49, 160.

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The source material for this is limited. There is no record extant of the preliminary investigation, which formed the basis of the bill of indictment. Lengthy reports of the hearing before the Tribunal criminel de Nouméa were published in the Moniteur, but they consisted only of a brief summary of proceedings and copies of the addresses of three of the five counsel. These reports were later issued in pamphlet form, together with a fairly detailed record of the interrogation of the defendants and the evidence of several prosecution witnesses (Affaire de Pouébo. Tribunal criminel de Nouméa, Nouméa n.d.). There is also an 'extrait analytique' of the hearing by a Marist lay brother, containing a four page summary of the case put by Dezarnaulds, who represented the three Christians charged. At the close of the hearing on 28 December 1867 the tribunal deferred judgement and ordered a supplementary investigation into the causes of the attacks, to be followed by a new hearing. The records extant of the second hearing are even more exiguous. A very brief summary of proceedings was published in the Moniteur. A copy of part of the public prosecutor's summing up, however, is lodged in the Marist archives labelled

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APART from Henry no one seems to have doubted Warebat's innocence until after the arrival of reinforcements from Nouméa. Gacher the gendarme and Krieger, the commander of the Gatop detachment, both praised and thanked the chief for his cooperation, his help in guarding the post and the mission, and his energetic pursuit of the rebels.²² With the arrival on 23 October of the new commandant of the Pwebo circonscription, Marine Infantry Captain Eugène Bourgey, and of the governor four days later, relations between Villard and the most senior administrators became strained,²³ while Warebat and the Pwebo Christians became more and more the objects of suspicion, accusations and strict supervision. Guillain seems almost to have regretted that a state of open warfare no longer existed, so that he might have crushed the tribe by force of arms:

Je ne doute pas que si la rébellion se montrant persistante m'avait conduit à mettre la localité en état de siège, le résultat eut été plus sûrement atteint que par les formes de la procédure ordinaire; mais la situation ne comportait plus cette mesure extrême.

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¹Affaire de Pouébo. Partie du réquisitoire du ministère public se rapportant à la mission' ([8 May 1868]: APM/ONC, 25). The trials and their aftermath were the subject of letters and reports by Guillain and by individual missionaries, but those which have survived are mostly polemical outbursts, and include little reasoned analysis of the role played by Warebat and his advisers.

²²Villard to Rougeyron, [Report on the events at Pwebo], 7-16 Nov. 1867: APM/ONC, 22.

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Villard, 'Journal de Pouébo', 25-6 Oct. 1867: APM/ONC, 2d.

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Guillain to Min., 4 Dec. 1867: ANOM, Carton 166.

Several incidents reflected the hardening attitude of the authorities: Warebat was threatened with arrest and the devastation of the Tinjin's lands if certain suspects were not immediately captured and handed over to the authorities;²⁵ the Christians were forbidden to frequent the post, which they had guarded for ten days; Christian women and children were prevented from taking refuge at the mission, whence they had fled through fear of the governor's threats.²⁶ That such measures were not imposed solely in the interest of administrative efficiency is suggested by Guillain's official correspondence and his relations with Villard.²⁷ The missionary was called before the governor on 12 November, and questioned closely on the validity of Bonu's protest of March 1866. According to Villard, Guillain expressed his conviction of Warebat's guilt in the following unequivocal terms:

... je ne crois pas votre chef innocent; car je connais assez les Calédoniens pour savoir que rien de grave ne se passe dans une tribu, sans que le chef en ait au moins connaissance. 28

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The threat of devastation was not carried out, which suggests that it was not made seriously, but was a fairly brutal means of ensuring Mwelebeng cooperation (Villard, 'Journal de Pouébo' 25 Oct., 3 Nov. 1867: APM/ONC, 2d).

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Ibid., 1-2 Nov. 1867; Villard to Rougeyron, [Report on the events at Pwebo], 7-16 Nov. 1867: APM/ONC, 22.

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Correspondence between Guillain and Villard, 13 Nov. 1867 (quoted in Villard to Rougeyron, 7-16 Nov. 1867): APM/ONC; Guillain to Min., 23 Oct., 4 Dec. 1867: ANOM, Carton 166.

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Villard to Rougeyron, (Report on the events at Pwebo), 7-16 Nov. 1867: APM/ONC, 2d.

Guillain's accusations against Warebat stemmed in part at least from his dislike of Christian chiefs and from his general assumptions regarding the structure of authority in New Caledonian tribes.²⁹ Champestève shared these assumptions, but his conclusions are important because they were reached despite a pro-missionary bias, which later became open partisanship.³⁰ He reasoned on the basis of the evidence collected during his preliminary investigation, and relied heavily on the depositions of the confessed murderers, several of whom had claimed that 'Martin' and 'Pierre' had acted on Warebat's express orders.³¹ At the trial itself seven of these men insisted that their own participation in the murders had resulted solely from their inability to disobey 'Martin', since he was a chief: 'l'autorité irrésistible d'un ordre émanant de Martin'. None, however, was then prepared to swear that the order to kill had originated with a higher authority than 'Martin', namely Warebat.³² 'Martin's'

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I.e., the belief, common to many Europeans, that only the high chief of a tribe could initiate a concerted course of action on the part of his 'subjects'; see below, p

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E.g., [Champestève], 'Partie du réquisitoire ... se rapportant à la mission', [8 May 1868]: APM/ONC, 25; Vigouroux to Procureur, 16 Mar. 1869; Grézel to Procureur, 16 Nov. 1869: APO.

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'Acte d'accusation', Tribunal criminel de Nouméa, 12 Dec. 1867: Mon., 15 Dec. 1867.

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Interrogation of seven accused, 17, 18, 20 Dec. 1867: Affaire de Pouébo. Tribunal criminel de Nouméa: 32-44, 62.

brother, 'Pierre', the assassin of Déméné and his children, had made a spontaneous declaration to Champestève, which provided the foundation of the accusation made against Warebat in the bill of indictment. According to this declaration, the high chief and three others had, at the great ceremony in August 1867, personally presented war clubs to 'Pierre' and 'Martin' with the order that they be used to kill Bailly, Déméné and Henry.³³ Under interrogation before the tribunal, however, 'Pierre' changed his evidence to Warebat's advantage: he stated then that he had had no personal dealings with the high chief or his advisers, but knew of their involvement only by hearsay from 'Martin'. 'Pierre' and 'Martin' both had a personal grievance against Déméné because he had settled at Bwaibat without 'Martin's' permission.³⁴

Several other witnesses claimed that when, on 7 October, Warebat's warriors had devastated the villages and gardens of Pareman they were greeted with the cry 'Why do you do this? You know that Napoleon [Warebat] provided the clubs

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According to Patouillet 1872:137, the presentation of a war club or axe was the means by which a chief designated his intended victim to his chosen assassin. Leenhardt, however, does not appear to mention this custom.

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Interrogation of 'Pierre', 19 Dec. 1867: Affaire de Pouébo. Tribunal criminel de Nouméa:45-8.

to kill the commandant!' ³⁵ 'Pierre' also gave evidence that 'Thierry', Warebat's leading adviser, had told him and 'Martin' to flee, because their gardens were to be burned and all the blame put on to them. There thus seems to have been a widespread belief amongst the people of Pareman that Warebat had instigated the uprising and later betrayed those whom he had provoked to violence. Similarly, Warebat's accusers claimed that the escape of the colonist Lehuau, who occupied part of the chief's own land, was further evidence of the cunning means by which he diverted suspicion from himself by protecting the European against whom he had the greatest personal grievance. ³⁶ To Rougeyron, on the other hand, Lehuau's escape was proof of the chief's innocence. ³⁷ Thus each side interpreted Warebat's behaviour in the way best suited to support its own case.

There was no direct evidence against Warebat, however, and it is impossible to conclude with any certainty whether he was guilty, or whether 'Martin' and perhaps 'Thierry' had invoked his name and his authority to ensure support for the scheme, or to distract suspicion from the ringleaders. Warebat

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Interrogation of 'Bauaé': *ibid.*, 54-5; cf. interrogation of 'Thierry' and 'Maximo', 20 Dec. 1867: *ibid.*, 69-71; evidence of Gacher and 'Manuel', 23 Dec. 1867: *ibid.*, 76, 79.

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Guillain to Min., 8 Mar. 1868: ANOM, Carton 166.

37

Rougeyron to Supérieur-général, 4 Feb. 1868: APM/ONC, 22.

naturally enough denied his own involvement, but suggested that his advisers might have given 'Martin' the club without the high chief's knowledge.³⁸ Given Warebat's earlier reputation as an 'imbécile' and Gacher's evidence that 'Thierry' had been able to name the culprits as soon as news of the murders became known,³⁹ it is probable that 'Thierry' at least knew of the plot in advance, if he was not actually behind it. The final judgement of the tribunal supports this thesis, since Warebat was exonerated of all except civil liability (together with the whole Mwelebeng tribe), while 'Thierry' was found guilty of provocation of the crimes and sentenced to death. One of the defence counsel expressed similar sentiments with regard to the relative guilt of Warebat and 'Thierry':

S'il m'appartenait de distribuer à chacun d'eux sa part de responsabilité, je la ferais plus légère à Napoléon qu'à Thierry. Le premier, comme le reconnaît le Ministère public, me semble dépourvu d'énergie, une sorte de roi fainéant que subjugue Thierry, le maire du palais.

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Interrogation of Warebat, 20 Dec. 1867: Affaire de Pouébo. Tribunal criminel de Nouméa: 72.

39

Evidence of Gacher, 23 Dec. 1867: *ibid.*, 76.

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Le Boucher, address to the Tribunal criminel de Nouméa, 28 Dec. 1867: Mon., 5 Jan. 1868. At Pwebo during the preliminary investigation 'Thierry' had shown great unwillingness to undergo interrogation, and on one occasion had escaped from custody (Villard, 'Journal de Pouébo', 27, 31 Oct., 2 Nov. 1867: APM/ONC, 2d).

Innocent at law but guilty in the eyes of the governor, Warebat in effect ceased to be chief of Mwelebeng from the time of his arrest in November 1867. After the trials he served six months' imprisonment for an attempted escape from custody, and was finally relieved of the chieftainship and exiled from the colony for an indefinite period in November 1868. This action was justified in terms of the chief's consistent insubordination and bad will towards the Pwebo commandant, and his prior knowledge of the planned insurrection.⁴¹

ON the question of motivation most of the defendants, pagans and apostates from Pareman, denied any knowledge of why the attacks had occurred. Only four expressed an opinion on the matter. 'Pierre' claimed to have been told by 'Martin' that the Europeans were to die in revenge for the death in exile of Bonu, who was assumed to have been murdered because he was strong and healthy when he left Pwebo.⁴² This evidence was corroborated by two prosecution witnesses, minor chiefs from Cambwen and Jawe, who were both clients of the

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'Arrêté du Gouverneur révoquant l'indigène Napoléon Ouarébate de ses fonctions de chef de la tribu de Pouébo', 7 Nov. 1868: Mon., 22 Nov. 1868; 'ordre du Gouverneur p.i. concernant l'embarquement des divers indigènes devant être mis à la disposition de M. le Commandant des Loyalty', 16 Mar. 1870: BO 1870: 230-1.

42

Interrogation of 'Pierre', 19 Dec. 1867: Affaire de Pouébo. Tribunal criminel de Nouméa:45, 48.

administration.⁴³ All three Christians charged, however, pointed to grievances over land as the main issue, and rejected Bonu's death as a possible motive.

The differing emphasis placed on these issues by supporters of the administration and by Christians was reflected in the terms of the mission/government controversy over causation and motivation. The authorities were determined to demonstrate that Bonu's exile and the alienation of Mwelebeng lands were not intrinsically unjust or in themselves a valid source of resentment. By their reasoning these factors became issues only because the missionaries had used them as pretexts to stir up hatred against the administration and the settlers, whose presence at Pwebo they bitterly resented because it weakened 'leur autorité despotique sur les indigènes'.⁴⁴ Thus the administration stressed the question of Bonu's death in

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The Cambwen were said by the administration to be the least compromised of all the groups involved in the affair of 6-7 October, and were alone allowed to remain on their ancestral lands (Guillain to Bourgey, 11 Nov. 1867 [encl. in Guillain to Min., 4 Dec. 1867]: ANOM, Carton 26, CG 1865-9). Cf. [Améline], 'Journal de Pouébo', 24 Sept. 1869: AVNC, in which it was said that they had contributed most to the uprising. At least two of the gendarmes' murderers were from Cambwen. The Jawe did not take part in the affair, and were faithful allies of the government in the expeditions which followed (A. Mathieu, 'Rapport ... au sujet de la formation de la tribu de Diaoué', 8 Dec. 1869: Mon., 6-13 Mar. 1870). Both tribes were later reconstituted as separate tribes, under the chieftainship of the two chiefs mentioned in the text.

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Nepveur, address to the Tribunal criminel de Nouméa, 27 Dec. 1867: Mon., 29 Dec. 1867.

order to expose the Marists to public censure and possible criminal proceedings over the affair of the dead chief's head.⁴⁵ Again, as far as land was concerned, the missionaries were said to have provoked Melanesian fears and suspicions by their intemperate protests, which had deliberately misrepresented the government's past actions and future intentions:

Le prétexte tiré de la dépossession reposait ... sur une base peu solide: néanmoins, il pouvait prendre une certaine consistance dans quelques esprits non instruits des détails que je viens de donner; aussi en fit-on usage pour pallier le vrai mobile de l'opposition l'ostracisme des colons du territoire de Pouébo ...

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Up to a point this argument had a certain validity. The missionaries undoubtedly feared that widespread European penetration into the Pwebo area would adversely affect the faith and the morals of their followers, and they resented the diminution of their own influence in tribal affairs which would inevitably follow the consolidation of government control and the opening of the region to European settlement. Thus the protests which they sponsored against the

45

See above, pp.186-7.

46

Mage, address to the Tribunal criminel de Nouméa, 27 Dec. 1867: Mon., 29 Dec. 1867; see also Guillain to Min., 8 Mar. 1868: ANOM, Carton 166.

expropriation of tribal land exaggerated the extent to which dispossession had already occurred, and were couched in dangerously provocative language. But the hyperbole was meant for European eyes, for official circles and pious public opinion in France. The issue of expropriation was not just a pretext dreamed up by the missionaries as part of a campaign of subversion of colonial interests. To the people threatened the possibility of future wholesale dispossession was frighteningly real; to those who had already lost their lands, or whose gardens were regularly devastated by settlers' herds, dispossession was already a fact. The government's assurances that their needs would be met was small comfort to Melanesians thus affected, and they did not rely on outside agitation to translate their fears into action.

For their part, the missionaries reasoned as follows: the authorities had forced the people of Pareman to apostatize, had split the tribe into two camps⁴⁷ and thereby reaped the whirlwind. Deprived of their religion and their chief, their lands lost or threatened, men like 'Martin' and 'Pierre' refused to tolerate punishment at the hands of the commandant,

47

Cf. Le Boucher, who denied the existence at Pwebo of 'une scission politique entre Napoléon, chef des canaques catholiques et les canaques soldats', and who invoked Gacher's evidence as support: 'Gacher vous l'a dit, Messieurs, le schisme religieux n'a pas pour conséquence le schisme politique' (address to the Tribunal criminel de Nouméa, 28 Dec. 1867: Mon., 5 Jan. 1868).

and the people of Pareman in general were no longer restrained from acts of violence by the resignation which Christianity inspired. The Christians, however, their savagery moderated by the impact of their new religion and the influence of their missionaries, had protected the post and the mission and pursued the rebels with tireless devotion to the cause of France and civilization. According to the Marists, religious persecution, dispossession, Bonu's exile and death had all helped to cause a violent Melanesian reaction despite the missionaries, and not because they had used these issues as pretexts in their campaign against French rule and European settlement.⁴⁸

Like most strongly partisan arguments neither the government nor the mission viewpoint was notable for its honesty or internal consistency. For instance, the administration insisted that Bonu's protest of March 1866, which Villard had organized, was vital in the development of Mwelebeng hostility towards the gendarmes and colonists of Pwebo:

Qu'est-il besoin d'insister pour établir la corrélation de l'acte présenté à la signature des principaux de Pouébo [Bonu's petition] avec les crimes d'octobre 1867 ... la preuve ressort flagrante de ce fait que dix-sept des accusés assis sur ce banc, et parmi eux les plus coupables, figuraient au nombre des adhérents.

49

 48

Rougeyron to ? , 30 Nov. 1867: APM/ONC, 22.

49

Mage, address to the Tribunal criminel de Nouméa, 27 Dec. 1867 Mon., 29 Dec. 1867; see also Guillain to Champestève, 14 Nov. 1867 (encl. in Guillain to Min., 8 Mar. 1868): ANOM, Carton 166.

Yet the petition was also said to be spurious: it was claimed that the signatories were forced to place their crosses on a document of whose contents they were ignorant.⁵⁰ As Champestève pointed out in his vindication of the missionaries during the second hearing, it was hardly possible that the Mwelebeng could have been profoundly influenced by something which meant nothing to them.⁵¹ Similar contradictions are apparent in Marist justifications of their own actions. For example, Guitta's public denunciation of the arrest of several catechists was at one point said to have been made in order to calm Melanesian anger.⁵² Elsewhere, however, the missionaries pointed out that since the protest was intended solely for European consumption, it had been delivered in French, and was thus unintelligible to the Melanesians present.⁵³ Again, the missionaries rejected the notion that the same protest, delivered in November 1865, could have been a logical precursor of events two years later:

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Nepveur, address to the Tribunal criminel de Nouméa, 27 Dec. 1867: Mon., 29 Dec. 1867; Guillain, address to Conseil d'administration, 16 Feb. 1868 (transcript encl. in Guillain to Min., 8 Mar. 1868): ANOM, Carton 166.

51

[Champestève], 'Partie du réquisitoire ... se rapportant à la mission', [8 May 1868]: APM/ONC, 25.

52

Rougeyron to Procureur, 4 Jan. 1868: APO.

53

Rougeyron to Supérieur-général, 4 Feb. 1868: APM/ONC, 22.

'il est peu croyable qu'ils the Mwelebeng aient nourri si longtemps ce funeste projet avant de le mettre à exécution'.⁵⁴
 Yet the evidence of uprisings in 1878 and 1917 indicates that New Caledonians differed not at all from other peoples in their capacity both to nourish ancient grievances and to harbour long-range plans for their redress.⁵⁵

The government's case against the Marists was developed in detail during the first trial of the Pwebo suspects. That these attacks were endorsed, if not actually inspired by Guillain was obvious from his correspondence. In December 1867 he expressed strong displeasure with the manner in which the judicial investigation had been conducted:

... l'instruction ... me paraît avoir laissé en dehors d'elle des individus pouvant être considérés comme ayant eu une participation morale aux dits événements.

56

The following February he used his extraordinary powers to ban Villard and Guitta from the Pwebo circonscription for two years, on the grounds that their influence on Melanesians

54

Mallet, 'Extrait analytique': APM/ONC, 22; see also Rougeyron to Procureur, 4 Jan. 1868: APO; [Champestève], 'Partie du réquisitoire ... se rapportant à la mission', [8 May 1868]:APM/ONC, 25.

55

Guiart 1968:119; 1970: passim.

56

Guillain to Min., 4 Dec. 1867: ANOM, Carton 166.

was detrimental to the interests of the government and the colony.⁵⁷ Guillain's irritation with Champestève increased as a result of the first hearing, and the public prosecutor was replaced as examining magistrate for the supplementary investigation by Victor Coudelou, an old friend of the governor.⁵⁸ Coudelou's inquiry concentrated on the question of missionary guilt. He compiled a bulky dossier:

... [plein] de déclarations plus ou moins vagues, plus ou moins étrangères à la cause, mais ayant toutes pour but final d'incriminer [sic] les Pères, les couvrir d'infame et établir enfin qu'ils sont les véritables instigateurs des assassinats et des pillages.

59

According to Champestève, who admittedly had a personal interest in denigrating the supplementary investigation, the new 'evidence' consisted in the main of unfounded rumours which had become current since his own earlier inquiry. At the second hearing, in May 1868, Champestève, in his official capacity, dismissed as worthless the entire case against the missionaries:

57

Guillain to Min., 8 Mar., 2 Oct. 1868: *ibid.*

58

On Guillain's friendship with Coudelou, see, for instance, Guillain to Min., 10 Apr. 1865: ANOM, Carton 152.

59

[Champestève], 'Partie du réquisitoire ... se rapportant à la mission', [8 May 1868]: APM/ONC, 25.

Pour nous, nous les croyons complètement innocents ... Où voir, en effet, une participation quelconque de la Mission de Pouébo dans ce qui s'est passé? Où sont les faits matériels, positifs ... ces faits manquent de la manière la plus absolue, le bon sens le plus ordinaire suffit pour le voir. 60

The question of missionary responsibility for the events of 6-7 October is largely insoluble. In the legal terms in which the administration attempted to incriminate them no guilt could be proven, as Champestève demonstrated. The Marists may, by means of anti-government propaganda and activities, have exacerbated general Mwelebeng fears for the integrity of their lands. On the other hand, there can be no doubt that the active participants in the uprising all belonged to that part of the tribe which was least subject to missionary influence, and which had for some time been regarded by the local authorities as well-disposed to the government cause. Moreover, Melanesians certainly had no intrinsic need of outside incitement to revolt, as their history of repeated violent response to European encroachment until 1917 proves. It is true, however, that the very fact of the missionary presence at Pwebo and the extent of their influence aggravated the relationship between the Mwelebeng and the civil authorities, because the tribe was inevitably drawn into the conflict between its spiritual advisers and the government. The administrative actions which helped

provoke the people of Pareman to violence were motivated, in part at least, by Guillain's abhorrence of Marist influence. The clans of this region suffered harassment and some dispossession because they had become an integral part of the mission-dominated Mwelebeng tribe. They attempted to save their lands by asserting their independence of the Mwelebeng and the mission, and when this failed they resorted to force. In this sense the missionaries helped to create the circumstances which led to the uprising, but their accusers did not invoke such indirect correlation.

'Thierry', a leading Christian of the Tinjin clan, was condemned as the author of the insurrection, but the question of 'Thierry's' involvement is not related to that of missionary responsibility. If indeed he did provoke or at least condone the violence, as seems likely,⁶¹ he acted not as a Christian but as a Melanesian who happened to be

61

Cf. the example of Philippe Dwi, the uncle of and 'regent' for the infant high chief of Yengen. Dwi, a Catholic, secretly provoked his Protestant traditional enemies of the upper Yengen valley to revolt against the French in 1917. When it became apparent that the uprising had failed, he betrayed those whom he had provoked to violence, and denounced an innocent Protestant chief. When his own involvement was finally revealed he committed suicide rather than face the consequences of his actions (Leenhardt 1932:65; Guiart 1970:274).

a Christian. His motives are obscure. Perhaps he hoped that a violent demonstration might avert the threat to the patrimony of his own clan, although there had as yet been little serious encroachment into the Tinjin heartland. Perhaps he deliberately provoked the Pareman clans into hopeless revolt in order to punish them for their rejection of Tinjin overlordship. His betrayal and energetic repression of the rebels may support this thesis; again, it may merely have reflected a desire to cover his own tracks once it became obvious that the uprising had failed. Whatever his intentions the plan misfired badly: 'Thierry' himself was condemned to death for his role in the affair; during the reorganization of the northern tribes in 1869 and 1870 the Tinjin lands, like those of most other tribes in the region, were confiscated and a newly constituted Mwelebeng tribe was confined to a specific reserve delimited within these lands:⁶² in the same reorganization most of the people of Pareman were separated administratively from the Mwelebeng and formed into independent tribes.⁶³

62

'Arrêté du Gouverneur constituant la tribu des Mouélébés', 28 Feb. 1870: BO 1870:168-70.

63

Of the Pareman clans, only the people of Cevit and Pwe-Kabarik (who spoke the Mwelebeng language) remained within the Mwelebeng tribe.

THE virulence of the government's attacks caused near panic amongst the Marists. They envisaged such awful consequences as legal proceedings against Villard and Guitta, the condemnation of the mission to pay huge indemnities, or even the expulsion of the order from the colony.⁶⁴ The Marists had always placed the priorities of the mission before those of its individual followers. Never was this tendency more pronounced than in times of conflict with the civil authorities. Thus in 1867-8 for most missionaries the plight of the Mwelebeng people, even the Christians, receded into the background in the face of the terrible perils which the mission as a whole and Villard and Guitta in particular seemed to face.⁶⁵

In the event, the missionaries' worst fears were not realized. No civil or criminal action was taken against either the mission or individual priests, although the ban on Villard's presence at Pwebo was not lifted,⁶⁶ and relations

64

Moris to Procureur, 28 Jan. 1868; Rougeyron to Procureur, 4 Jan., 1 Feb., 6 March 1868: APO; [J.M. Bertrand], 'Affaires de Pouébo, ou Les Trois Avocats, par M^r. X X X': APM/ONC, 22.
65

E.g., the Marist archives hold only that section of Champestève's address which exculpated the mission from responsibility in the Pwebo affair. Similarly, mission letters during most of the Guillain period tended to concentrate far more on the plight of the mission than on that of the Christians or Melanesians in general.

66

Villard, 'Journal de Pouébo', 17 Apr. 1875: AVNC.

between the missionaries of the north-east and the garrison at Pwebo remained consistently poor. In general, however, the position of the Marists vis-à-vis the colonial government reached something of an uneasy stalemate, since neither side had sufficient influence in France to bring about the demise of the other. At Pwebo the overt influence of the missionaries in temporal matters became much more discreet, but the commitment of the Christians remained firm, and spiritually the mission's position was if anything enhanced. Warebat was replaced as chief by his first cousin,⁶⁷ 'Evaristo', a good Christian who retained his faith, yet managed to satisfy the administration by absolute obedience to the demands made upon him and by giving the appearance, at least, of independence from missionary guidance.⁶⁸

The main sufferers from the events of 6-7 October 1867 and their aftermath, apart from the actual victims of the attacks, were Melanesian. The Mwelebeng tribe was

67

'Brother' in New Caledonian terms: Villard, 'Journal de Pouébo', 14 Nov. 1867: AVNC.

68

'Décision du Gouverneur nommant le chef de la tribu des Mouélébés', 28 Feb. 1870: BO 1870:170-1 ('... depuis le mois de novembre 1867 ladite tribu a été dirigée, à notre satisfaction et à celle des commandants de la circonscription de Pouébo, par le cousin germain de l'ex-chef'); Rougeyron to Supérieur-général, 18 Nov. 1869: APM/ONC, 20, suggested that 'Evaristo' was left alone because the firmness and courage shown by his predecessors had deterred the administration from treating him in like manner.

held to be civilly responsible for the deaths and damage occasioned by the uprising, and was ordered to pay indemnities totalling 76,834 francs to the European victims. This judgement was based on Guillain's edict of 24 December 1867, which decreed the legal existence of the New Caledonian tribe, and its collective civil responsibility for losses sustained as a result of criminal acts or misdemeanours committed by members of the tribe acting in concert:

Art. 2. La tribu est administrativement et civilement responsable, susceptible par conséquent d'être condamnée à des dommages et intérêts auxquels donneraient lieu des crimes ou des délits commis sur son territoire, par des rassemblements ou attroupements, soit contre les personnes, soit contre les propriétés domaniales ou privées.

69

A subsequent ministerial despatch pointed out to Guillain that his edict could not apply retrospectively (and thus did not cover the events of 6-7 October),⁷⁰ but the governor seems to have ignored this instruction, because later legislation specifically referred to the damages granted against the Mwelebeng.⁷¹

 69

'Arrêté du Gouverneur déclarant, par voie d'interprétation des actes législatifs antérieurs, l'existence légale de la tribu indigène dans l'organisation coloniale de la Nouvelle-Calédonie', 24 Dec. 1867: Mon., 29 Dec. 1867.

70

Min. to Guillain, 22 May 1868: ANOM, Carton 59.

71

E.g., 'Arrêté ... constituant la tribu des Mouélébés', 28 Feb. 1870: BO 1870:170; 'arrêté ... constituant la tribu de Diaoué', 28 Feb. 1870: *ibid.*, 184.

Fifteen Mwelebeng were sentenced to imprisonment with hard labour for terms ranging from six months (two Christians who had attempted to escape from custody) to life. Ten men, all except 'Thierry' from the south-eastern villages, were sentenced to death.⁷² Their request for leave to appeal to the Emperor for clemency was refused by the administrative council of the colony on Guillain's casting vote, on the stated grounds that the sentences were justified, and that a successful appeal would be a miscarriage of justice.⁷³ On 18 May 1868, nine days after the judgement was handed down,⁷⁴ the ten were publicly executed on the beach at Pwebo:

72

'Jugement du tribunal criminel de Nouméa', 9 May 1868: Mon., 17 May 1868. Three men were imprisoned for life, three for fifteen years, one for ten years, three for eight years, three for five years, two for six months. Those sentenced to eight years or more were exiled to Indo-China (Conseil d'administration, 22 June 1869: ANOM, Carton 91). It is not known if any eventually returned.

⁷³The head of the government's legal department (chef du service judiciaire) and the governor reasoned as follows in respect of the men condemned to life imprisonment; the same argument had previously been applied to those under sentence of death:

"Les condamnés aux travaux forcés ... pas plus que ceux condamnés à la peine de mort pour les mêmes faits, ne méritent, suivant nous, que l'on recours [sic] pour eux à la clémence de l'Empéreur...."

Cette lecture achevée M le Gouverneur prend la parole... La justice qui a connu de l'affaire a parfaitement pesé le pour et le contre: il n'y a aucune exagération dans la peine qui frappe ces indigènes et il serait impolitique de revenir sur la sentence qui le condamne en faisant appel, en leur faveur, à la clémence de l'Empéreur.

Nous savons tous que cette clémence ne fait jamais défaut quand on y fait appel et nous pouvons être certains, dès maintenant, que tout ce que nous demanderions dans ce sens nous serait accordé.

Nous devons donc faire exécuter le jugement ...

(Conseil d'administration, 11 Aug. 1868: ANOM, Carton 90).

⁷⁴Mon., 14 June 1868.

... la guillotine, montrée pour la première fois aux yeux des Canaques, fit rouler neuf [sic] têtes sur la plage de Pouébo.

75

The impact of this gruesome scene on its Melanesian witnesses was not recorded, but can well be imagined. Emprin, the missionary at Bonde, reported the reaction: 'Les Blancs se disent humains, et ils tuent plus cruellement que nous'.⁷⁶ Guillain's summary justice was not well-received in Paris. He received peremptory orders that in future all death sentences were to be submitted to the Emperor for review. This limitation powerfully affected the governor's future course of action,⁷⁷ and the death penalty was not again inflicted on Melanesians during Guillain's term of office.

The reversal after 1862 of the official attitude towards the mission thus had a profound effect on the Mwelebeng. Their early commitment to the mission rebounded upon them, and they paid dearly for the advantages which they had derived before 1862. They had accepted that commitment freely, and to that extent determined their own future. But they also became victims of a process beyond their control - of the determination of the colonial government to assert its authority and prerogatives in the face of the missionaries, and of the pretensions of the latter to have effective moral, social and political control over the tribes which accepted their influence.

⁷⁵ Patouillet 1872:54.

⁷⁶ [A. Emprin], 'Notes particulières (Bonde)', [1869]:APM/ONC, 2e.

⁷⁷ Conseil d'administration, 25 Feb. 1870:ANOM, Carton 93; see below, pp. 307-9.

PART II: THE NORTH-EAST 1868-70

FROM the time of Bourgey's arrival at Pwebo as commandant in October 1867 the Mwelebeng Christians had been ordered to provide porters and build shelters for the troops.⁷⁸ Early in November the old four-man police post was officially replaced by a garrison of eighty men with artillery support. The new post was to be built at Uvanu, near the chief's residence, with a small outpost at Ubac to guard Henry's establishment.⁷⁹

It is apparent that Andrew Henry was the object of extraordinary solicitude on the part of a colonial government which often enough infuriated free settlers by its excessively autocratic and bureaucratic methods. He became by far the largest lay landowner in the Pwebo circonscription during the 1860's; he was granted, admittedly under terms favourable to the state, a total monopoly of the trade in sandalwood between Port St-Vincent and Nakety - in effect the northern two-thirds of the main island;⁸⁰ he was allotted

78

Villard, 'Journal de Pouébo', 25 Oct. 1867: APM/ONC, 2d.

79

'Arrêté du Gouverneur constituant le garnison de Pouébo et délimitant la circonscription de ce nom', 4 Nov. 1867: BO 1867: 327. Guillain to Bourgey, 11 Nov. 1867 (encl. in Guillain to Min., 4 Dec. 1867): ANOM, Carton 166.

80

Douglas 1971: 168.

a number of convict labourers; he successfully called upon the Wagap post for military assistance in 1867, and the soldiers sent were placed under his sole command; a ten-man outpost of the Uvanu garrison was set up to protect his establishment, and after the attacks in October 1868 a separate forty-man post was created at Ubac for this purpose; he was granted heavy damages against the Mwelebeng tribe by the Tribunal criminel de Nouméa, but it is not known if he ever managed to collect them. Between 1865 and 1871 Henry was mentioned no less than nineteen times in sessions of the colony's administrative council, whose extant records are by no means complete, mostly in connection with concessions of land or business contracts concluded with the administration. No other settler received anything like as much official attention.

The obvious, and probably also the real reason for all this concern was the fact that Henry's land and sandalwood concessions were granted in return for an undertaking to import New Hebridean indentured labourers into the colony, in an attempt to alleviate the chronic labour shortage.⁸¹ By 1870 Henry no longer had this field to himself, but he remained the largest operator. By that year several

81

Conseil d'administration, 1 May, 28 Nov. 1865: ANOM, Carton 89; 1 Feb. 1870: ANOM, Carton 93; 9 Feb. 1871: ANOM, Carton 92.

hundred indentured New Hebrideans had passed through the colony under Henry's auspices. The other side of the coin was in the fact that few of Henry's business dealings with the government were on terms particularly favourable to him,⁸² several of his enterprises failed,⁸³ while Melanesian hostility caused him severe financial losses, especially in 1867.⁸⁴

Henry's relations with the Pwebo missionaries and the Mwelebeng Christians were never warm, and he was the first to accuse Warebat of complicity in the 1867 affair. But he seems not to have been involved in the administration's programme of harassment of the mission between 1865 and 1867, unlike several other settlers of the vicinity. Champestève referred to him in 1868 as a very honourable man.⁸⁵ Nonetheless, as the occupier of most of the expropriated Pareman land, and the worst offender as far as marauding livestock was concerned,⁸⁶ he was the main local object of Melanesian hatred, and the victim of the most concerted attacks.

82

E.g., Conseil d'administration, 1 Feb. 1870: ANOM, Carton 93.

83

E.g., Conseil d'administration, 17 June 1868: ANOM, Carton 90.

84

Conseil d'administration, 17 July 1869: ANOM, Carton 91.

85

[Champestève], 'Partie du réquisitoire ... se rapportant à la mission', [8 May 1868]: APM/ONC, 25.

86

Warebat to Rougeyron, 1 May 1866: APM/ONC, 22.

Inevitably, given the administration's desperate shortage of men and resources, the main burden of building the Uvanu post fell on Melanesians. At first the Mwelebeng, in disgrace because of the recent uprising, were called out en masse, accompanied by some men from Pambwa, Bonde and Balad. By 17 November the situation had been regularized. The Mwelebeng were ordered to provide a daily corvée of thirty men, who were to be relieved each week and who were to receive no remuneration or provisions.⁸⁷ The demand for labour was such, however, that nearly every tribe in the circonscription, Christian and pagan, was eventually called upon to contribute a regular contingent, although the Mwelebeng bore the brunt of the burden. Only the Puma, the Cambwen and the Mwandin (the Paak sub-tribe which had apostatized in 1864 under the influence of Undo of Balad) were consistently exempt, because of their status as faithful allies of the administration.⁸⁸ However, even they participated voluntarily in order to highlight their loyalty to the régime. Tribes such as the Maluma of Pambwa, which had never given the government cause for displeasure, were supposed to be treated more leniently than the Mwelebeng;

87

Guillain to Bourgey, 11 Nov. 1867 (encl. in Guillain to Min., 4 Dec. 1867): ANOM, Carton 166; Villard, 'Journal de Pouébo', 16, 18 Nov. 1867: APM/ONC, 2d.

88

Vincent to Procureur, 14 July 1868: APO; [J. Améline], 'Journal de Pouébo', 1 Oct. 1868: AVNC.

they were to be released as soon as the state of the work permitted, and were to receive the generous allowance of a ship's biscuit per man per day, when their efforts proved satisfactory:

Je vous autorise à faire délivrer aux Pamboa, à titre de gratification, une galette de biscuit par jour et par homme, pour les encourager au travail, quand vous en serez content bien entendu.

89

Unfortunately, however, the demand for labour at Pwebo increased rather than diminished, and money never seemed to be available to provide even minimum sustenance for the workers.⁹⁰ A vicious circle developed: a revolt had caused the need for labour in the first place; shortage of labour led to the corvées; owing to shortage of funds the workers could neither be paid nor fed, which resulted in great hardship; this led to resentment and a marked lack of enthusiasm on the part of Melanesians to fulfil their obligations; subsequent desertions and finally outright refusal to obey brought about the threat of punishment of recalcitrant chiefs and tribesmen; this in turn deepened resentment and finally culminated in violent resistance.

89

Guillain to Bourgey, 11 Nov. 1867 (encl. in Guillain to Min., 4 Dec. 1867): ANOM, Carton 166.

90

Villard, 'Journal de Pouébo', 16 Nov. 1867: APM/ONC, 2d; Anon., 'Résumé des lettres du P. Améline, missionnaire à Pouébo, du 1 Mar au 6 Mai 1868', n.d.: APM/ONC, 25.

Despite its unpopularity, however, forced labour on the Pwebo post would probably not have ended in violence if not for the inhumanity and intolerance of the Europeans who directed the work. The main complicating factor was Captain Louis Pons of the Marine Infantry, who succeeded Bourgey as commandant of the circonscription in February 1868. By any standards he seems to have been a vicious, small-minded man, racist and despotic almost to the point of insanity.⁹¹ If Joseph Améline, Villard's replacement at Pwebo, is to be believed, Pons took sadistic pleasure in making the lot of the Melanesian workmen as unpleasant as possible. The missionary's account may well have been exaggerated, but there is reason to believe that it was accurate in essence. Améline was a gentle, mild man,⁹² who had not previously indulged in anti-government polemics, and who had enjoyed good relations with the civil authorities in his previous post.⁹³ This was in all probability one of the reasons why he was sent to Pwebo. Yet his letters and

91

Dr Jules Patouillet, who was not at all sympathetic towards the missionaries, commented of Pons: 'Malheureusement, le commandant chargé d'y installer un poste fut forcé d'accabler les noirs de corvées. Peut-être même se montra-t-il un peu négrophobe' (Patouillet 1872:54).

92

Vincent to Procureur, 14 July 1868: APO. Améline was rather too mild for Rougeyron's liking - see Rougeyron to Supérieur-général, 12 Oct. 1868, 8 Dec. 1869: APM/ONG, 20.

93

Améline to Procureur, 24 Aug., 4 Dec. 1867: APO.

diary for 1868⁹⁴ are full of appalled descriptions of the brutal punishments inflicted by Pons on the Christians, and of the unnecessary harshness with which Melanesians were treated, pagans as well as Christians. During the supplementary investigation into the causes of the 1867 uprising Pons was said to have had unsatisfactory witnesses tied to trees or posts,⁹⁵ bound neck, waist, hand and foot until they changed their evidence. A catechist was trussed up in this way for five days and nights. Others were imprisoned on feeble pretexts, and a Christian who refused to work on Easter day was reported to have been tied to a cross, laid out in the sun until he fainted, and then imprisoned, still bound to his cross, until the following Sunday. Such treatment does not exactly accord with Guillain's injunction to Bourgey in November 1867 to allow Melanesians freedom to worship:

Vous devez d'un autre côté leur laisser une entière liberté pour l'exercice des cultes sans tolérer toutefois qu'aucun d'eux y soit contraint. Vous n'oublierez pas que les dimanches et jours fériés les travaux doivent être suspendus ...

96

94

Anon., 'Résumé des lettres du P. Améline ...', n.d.: APM/ONC, 25; Améline to Procureur, 12, 16 July 1868; APO; [Améline], 'Journal de Pouébo', 16 Aug. -31 Dec. 1868 passim: AVNC; see also Vincent to Procureur, 14 July 1868: APO.

95

At the Isle of Pines, at least, this was a traditional form of punishment (Goujon, 'Journal de l'île des Pins', 10 June 1852).

96

Guillain to Bourgey, 11 Nov. 1867 (encl. in Guillain to Min., 4 Dec. 1867): ANOM, Carton 166.

According to the missionary account Pons, whom Améline, with bitter humour, dubbed 'Pilate', reserved his worst excesses for the Christians. Nonetheless, pagans also suffered, with the exception of the allies of the government. Not only were no workmen fed by the administration, but their hours were long (twelve hours per day according to Améline), and they were often refused permission to return to their tribes to harvest their yams and plant new ones. At times people who attempted to gather their crops had them confiscated for the use of the garrison. The Mwelebeng were in one respect better off, because the construction work actually took place on their lands, and they did not therefore have to travel long distances to tend their crops. However, the starving foreigners, including the Christians of Bonde, were authorized by the commandant to forage in the gardens of the Mwelebeng, which placed an intolerable burden on this tribe, and exacerbated inter-tribal tensions.⁹⁷

In the end, however, reaction to this treatment came not from the more heavily-burdened Mwelebeng, but from the Tea Janu, a pagan tribe which resided at Webia, near the headwaters of the river Wayem. The passivity of the Mwelebeng doubtless resulted in the main from their vivid memories of the suppression of the previous year's uprising,

97

Rougeyron to Cardinal Barnabo, 6 Apr. 1868: APM/ONC, 20; Rougeyron to Procureur, 17 Jan. 1869: APO.

and of the harsh sentences which had been meted out by the Tribunal criminel. Furthermore, Mwelebeng lands were very much occupied territory, and the tribe was under constant surveillance. The Marists, of course, claimed that their stoicism under severe stress was an attribute inspired by Christianity.⁹⁸ The Tea Janu, however, had had relatively few contacts with Europeans, and had never felt the weight of French repression, although their lands had been sacked by the crusading Mwelebeng in 1860. In 1862 the Tea Janu chief had agreed to send children to Pwebo to be trained as catechists. They had returned to their tribe in 1865, but made little progress in the face of concerted official opposition. In August 1867 an old enemy of the mission, a man who had been exiled to Tahiti for several years for his role in burning the Pwebo church in 1858, boasted publicly that he had been charged by the governor to prevent the Tea Janu from becoming Christian.⁹⁹ In mid-1868 the Tea Janu workers at Pwebo were simply not prepared to compromise their proud independence in obedience to the orders of an authority which they scarcely felt, and which they had no reason to recognize. After cooperating for about two

98

Améline to Procureur, 2 Jan. 1869: APO.

99

Villard, 'Journal de Pouébo', 10 Aug. 1867: APM/ONC, 2d.

months, they decided that the burden was intolerable.

Towards the end of September 1868 Améline described in tones of deep foreboding the extent to which the situation had deteriorated:

Les affaires se compliquent pour le Comm^{dt}. Les tribus canaques refusent partout de venir travailler disant que ça n'en finit point, se plaignant d'être maltraités par les soldats avec qui ils travaillent et disant qu'ils meurent de faim. - Par suite de ces dispositions des Canaques et du caractère du Comm^{dt}. il pourrait fort bien arriver des affaires graves dont on ne saurait prévoir maintenant l' issue, mais qui à coup sûr ne se termineront pas à l' avantage des pauvres canaques. - A dire vrai, il est très-certain que les travaux deviennent insupportables et à cause de leur durée et à cause de leur mode d'exécution.

1

On 4 October the Tea Janu provided their own solution; they walked out and refused to return. Workers from other tribes followed suit.² The next day Pons, to crown his brutality with arrogant folly, sent a party of six soldiers to Webia to retrieve the workers. Améline confided his fears to his diary:

Je ne sais si je me trompe, mais je crains qu'il arrive quelque malheur Je ne crois ... pas bien prudent d'envoyer ces six soldats au milieu de ces gens, dans de telles circonstances.

3

1
[Améline], 'Journal de Pouébo', 29 Sept. 1868: AVNC.

2
Améline to Procureur, 2 Jan. 1869: APO.

3
[Améline], 'Journal de Pouébo', 5 Oct. 1868: AVNC.

His presentiments were well founded, for on 7 October, a year to the day after the murders and looting at Pwebo and Ubac, the soldiers were ambushed and murdered by a party of Tea Janu, acting on the orders of their chief.⁴ The next day a small force which Pons had led to the scene of the massacre was forced to withdraw when attacked by several hundred warriors. This ill-considered action by Pons reassured the Tea Janu of the impregnability of their mountain strongholds and convinced them that they were feared by the French. Not long afterwards the affair blossomed into full-scale war. On 17 October an isolated colonist was robbed and murdered by a band of women and children from the coastal Tea Janu village of Wenop. The following morning the main body of Tea Janu descended upon Henry's property at Ubac. They were beaten off, but remained in the vicinity. The attack was renewed on 29 October, but was again repulsed with heavy losses to the assailants.

Between 8 October and 15 November, when Mathieu arrived as commander-in-chief of the three northern circonscriptions of Gatop, Pwebo and Wagap, Pons made no

4

Except where otherwise indicated the outline of events in the remainder of this chapter is based on [Améline], 'Journal de Pouébo', 7 Oct. 1868 - 10 Dec. 1869; Mon., 25 Oct., 22 Nov. 1868, 14, 21, 28 Feb., 7 Mar., 20 June 1869; Guillain to Min., 19 Feb. 1869: ANOM, Carton 26, CG 1865-9.

move against the marauders except to send the Mwelebeng, armed with mission muskets, and the Cambwen to Ubac to harass them. Reinforcements arrived slowly, until by mid-November a force of about two hundred, including twenty-seven fusiliers indigènes from Wagap, had been collected at Pwebo and Ubac. Ubac became the main base for the great operation of repression which finally got under way at the end of November and was to continue intermittently until the middle of the next year.

Before the repression began, however, it had been decided officially that the uprising also encompassed the Maluma of Pambwa and the Paak of Bonde, a partly Christian tribe. The Maluma were said to have participated in the second attack on Ubac, but the main grievance against both tribes was the refusal of their chiefs to obey successive summons to present themselves at Pwebo to make formal professions of allegiance to the French. According to Guillain this proved, ipso facto, their complicity in the revolt, and the entire tribes were subjected to the full rigours of the repression because of the sins of omission of their chiefs.⁵ An elaborate case was later built up against both tribes. Under interrogation Koima, the Tea Janu chief,

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Mon., 14 Feb. 1869; 'arrêté ... qui déclare les tribus des Païacs et des Maloumes dissoutes et expulsées de leur territoire', 28 Feb. 1869: Mon., 28 Feb. 1869.

claimed that his opposite number at Pambwa had originally devised the plot whereby any soldier who came on to their respective territories would be killed. After the massacre, according to Koima, he had proposed an alliance with the chief of the Paak, and been accepted.⁶ The missionaries, however, strenuously denied that the Paak were guilty of anything more serious than unwillingness to work under inhumane conditions and the chief's refusal to obey the summons to Pwebo, a refusal inspired by fear rather than defiance:

Toute leur crime est de n'avoir pas voulu aller travailler pour le gouvernement sans une petite rétribution, au moins en vivres pour leur propre subsistance.... ne pouvant plus faire de pareilles corvées dans de telles conditions ils avaient pris le parti de refuser, lorsqu'on les sommerait de revenir, quoiqu'il leur en coûtât. Ils ont donc refusé de se rendre à l'appel du Comm^{dt}. du poste pour les services et à l'ordre du gouverneur qui leur enjoignait de venir lui rendre compte de leur conduite. Après trois sommations M. le Gouverneur a donné ordre de tout détruire dans cette tribu, ce qui a été exécuté à la lettre malheureusement.

7

Oddly enough, no official mention was made of the refusal of the Paak to continue the corvées, although several years before similar behaviour had been considered ample justification

6

Mathieu to Guillain, 24 Feb. 1870 (encl. in Guillain to Min., 11 Mar. 1870): ANOM, Carton 26, CG 1865-9.

7

Rougeyron to Procureur, 17 Jan. 1869: APO; see also Améline to Procureur, 2 Jan. 1869; Lambert to Procureur, 19 Jan. 1869: APO; Emprin, 'Notes particulières (Bonde)', 1869: APM/ONC, 2e; J.Thomassin, [Report, 1869]: APM/ONC, 22.

for the devastation and expropriation of a partly Christian tribe.⁸ This omission suggests that even Guillain considered that the treatment of the workers might be thought excessive, and had therefore decided to play down this issue. After the end of the war, however, the governor tacitly admitted that the corvées had been a major source of Melanesian resentment when he consigned a detachment of convicts to Pwebo to continue the construction work which had begun nearly two years before.⁹

The Marists saw the accusations against the Paak and the subsequent punishment of this tribe as yet another manifestation of Guillain's insensate hatred of missionaries and Christians, and of his determination to drive the mission from the colony: 'Guillain ne veut pas de missionnaires. C'est un bon expédient qu'il a trouvé pour s'en débarrasser'.¹⁰ Once again the matter is difficult to elucidate because the evidence produced by both sides, especially the Marists, was interpreted in terms of the mission/government polemic. At this time the administration, warned perhaps by experience, made no attempt to inculcate the Marist order or individual missionaries.

8

See below, p

9

'Arrêté du Gouverneur relatif à la formation et à l'emploi du détachement d'ouvriers de la transportation dit d'Ouvanou', 3 Sept. 1869: BO 1869:460-2.

10

Rougeyron to Procureur, 17 Jan. 1869: APO.

In any case, a good number of the Christians of Bonde (said to be two-thirds¹¹), the inhabitants of the hamlets of Pwalu and Tande, saved themselves from proscription by dissociating themselves from their chief's stance and professing loyalty to the régime. As will be seen, the advantages they derived were dubious, but they at least escaped the weeks of military expeditions and devastation of villages and gardens which the rest of the Paak, the Maluma and the Tea Janu had to endure.

It seems likely that on this occasion the governor, unable to strike effectively at the mission, took the opportunity provided by the war to crush the independently minded tribes of the region, in order that the Melanesian population might be reorganized, its land holdings delimited and the way paved for the opening of the north to European colonization.¹² Guillain certainly did not abandon his policy of trying to reduce the mission to subservience - the extension of European colonization was in a sense a means to achieve this end - but he concentrated on the task of consolidating by force the European occupation of this part of the colony, and of compelling the Melanesians to adopt the

11

Améline to Procureur, 1 Jan. 1869; Rougeyron to Procureur, 17 Jan. 1869: APO.

12

A ministerial despatch to Guillain of February 1869 commented on '[le] système que vous entendez suivre pour procurer, dans de bonnes conditions de sécurité, de nouveaux espaces à la colonisation' (Min. to Guillain, 25 Feb. 1869 [draft]: ANOM, Carton 166).

role which he envisaged for them: 'd'aider la colonisation européenne par leur travail'.¹³

The emphasis placed after 1868 on the subjection of Melanesians and the expansion of European colonization was in no sense a departure from Guillain's earlier policies. Both were essential parts of the programme which he had outlined on taking up office.¹⁴ Admittedly, another aspect of his initial programme, the imposition of government authority on the Marist mission, acquired an inflated importance in the years after 1864, and especially in 1867-8. Guillain's Melanesian and colonial policies, however, continued to be implemented, at times as a corollary of his campaign against the mission, at times independently. By late 1868, with relations between mission and administration at an impasse, the other aspects of Guillain's original plan of action came to the fore, as he strove to complete the tasks which he had set himself in 1862. His concern to develop and extend European colonization to some extent reflected pressure from powerful settler interests; but with fewer than 1,500 free settlers in the colony by 1869, and no elected legislature, or even a council with elected members, only those few colonists with powerful connections in France

13

Mathieu, speech made at Pwebo, 28 Feb. 1869: Mon., 26 June 1869.

14

See above, pp.165-6.

could hope to bring effective pressure to bear on a governor whose autocratic powers were matched by his readiness to exercise them. Similarly his interest in the future of colonization hardly reflected a benevolent concern for the aspirations of the settler community, since in general he despised the colonial population:

. A vrai dire, il n'y a pas encore d'opinion publique dans notre population coloniale, pas de lien entre les individus qui la composent si ce n'est le mobile capricieux d'un intérêt immédiat. Son niveau moral est soumis aux mêmes oscillations et se rejoint d'ailleurs du grand nombre d'aventuriers et de gens tarés qu'elle comprend.

15

Guillain's concern tended to be based on the rather academic notion that European settlement had to develop if the colony was to prosper and if France was to receive some return for her outlay in acquiring and pacifying it. He regarded a steady increase in the number of free settlers as a vital corollary of a healthy colony, especially one with such a strong penal character. ¹⁶

The policy of repression implemented by the governor in 1868-9, and his refusal to allow individual tribes to sue

15

Guillain to Min., 10 Sept. 1867: ANOM, Carton 166.

16

Guillain to Min., 30 Apr. 1863: ANOM, Carton 26, CG 1855-64, 27 Aug. 1869: ANOM, Carton 166.

for peace,¹⁷ convinced the missionaries that he meant to annihilate the rebels. It deepened a long-felt suspicion on the part of the Marists that Guillain's native policy aimed to provoke Melanesians to violent reaction in order that they might be crushed militarily and their lands confiscated in retaliation.¹⁸ A charge of such sinister intent cannot be proven, and it owes much to missionary readiness to attribute to Guillain the most base motives. It is in any case sufficiently damning to point out that Guillain used the pretext provided by the revolt of the Tea Janu to suppress less guilty tribes and to deprive the people of the region of much of their freedom of action and most of their lands. Furthermore, as will be seen, the processes of reorganization and cantonnement were not applied with equal rigour to all tribes, but were based on criteria which reflected the religious affiliation of particular tribes.

The first stage of the repression lasted a month. It included a four-day operation against the Tea Janu and two campaigns against the Paak and the Maluma, lasting ten

17

See below, p. 306.

18

Lambert to Procureur, 8 Dec. 1865, 19 Jan. 1869: APO; [Améline], 'Journal de Pouébo', 14 Mar. 1869: AVNC; see also Palazzy to Procureur, 11 Apr. 1869: APO, for a rather hysterical suggestion that Guillain aimed to exterminate the Melanesian male population in order to solve the problem of shortage of women in the colony. Given the governor's preoccupation with Melanesians as a possible source of unskilled labour, this seems unlikely, to say the least.

days in all. On each occasion a number of detachments of French and Melanesian troops, supported by Melanesian auxiliaries (including the warriors of Yengen, Mwelebeng, Arama, Puma, Cambwen, Jawe, Mwandin, Kumak and Gomen) set out from different points and criss-crossed the rebels' territory. The insurgents were rarely seen, although a few people were killed at Bonde, and some female prisoners were taken. The troops concentrated on devastation: gardens were plundered and destroyed, dwellings were burned. This was justified as the only effective means of striking at an enemy who refused open confrontation and who easily melted away into tangled mountain terrain as soon as European troops penetrated into his territory:

Il ne faut pas oublier d'ailleurs que c'est la perte la plus sérieuse pour l'ennemi, et que le moyen le plus efficace pour le réduire est précisément cette destruction de ses abris et de ses ressources alimentaires que tend à compléter chaque expédition.

19

On 24 December 1868 a military post was established at Bonde, in the former main village of the Paak tribe, adjacent to the mission. From this base small detachments constantly harried the Paak and to a lesser extent the Maluma. One full-scale battle occurred on Maluma territory when one of these patrols was trapped by a large contingent of warriors. The

soldiers managed to escape, but lost two men. According to the French account many Melanesians were killed, including a war chief of the Maluma.

While the Paak and Maluma bore the brunt of operations, the Tea Janu had enjoyed a two month respite, until early in February a five-pronged assault was launched against them. Only one of the French columns encountered the rebels, and killed several, but the scorched earth policy was continued. In March Guillain rejected an attempt by the Maluma and the Paak to sue for peace, on the grounds that all the rebel tribes must surrender and the murderers of the soldiers be handed over before peace could be concluded.²⁰ Two more big expeditions, in the second of which the Paak and the Maluma were allowed to participate as auxiliaries of the French, were necessary before the Tea Janu could be induced to surrender on the government's terms. The French troops were by this stage equipped with the chassepot rifle, which was greatly superior to their old muzzle-loading carbines and muskets. But their increased firepower did not markedly affect the number of Melanesians killed, despite the

20

A precedent existed for this, as in the late 1850's a number of southern tribes which were at war with the French were refused permission to surrender until they had handed over the murderers of several settlers (Testard to Min., 29 Aug. 1858: ANOM, Carton 42; du Bouzet to Saisset, 25 Oct. 1858: ANOM, Carton 231).

fact that the Tea Janu must by this stage have been weakened by their fugitive existence and the loss of their gardens.²¹ The Tea Janu finally submitted on 14 June 1869, and handed over the men demanded by the government, who were all said to have been involved in the initial massacres.

The prisoners were at once incarcerated at Uvanu, on very short rations, and suffered severely from hunger.²² Their case did not come up for consideration until February 1870. The manner in which they were judged and the sentences they received differed strikingly from the trials and sentences of the Mwelebeng in 1867-8. The men were judged by administrative fiat of the governor rather than by court martial or in the civil courts. Guillain reasoned as follows: the repression and subsequent investigations had been protracted, and the tribe had been reduced to great misery: the sole proof of guilt against the prisoners was the fact that their own tribesmen had surrendered them as the perpetrators of the murders; should the case go to the courts, some of the accused would be sentenced to death, which would occasion further delay while the judgement was submitted to the Emperor for review (in accordance with ministerial instructions of September 1868). The question of delay no

21

Mathieu to Guillain, 4 Apr. 1869 (extract encl. in Guillain to Min., 9 May 1869): ANOM, Carton 26, CG 1865-9.

22

[Améline], 'Journal de Pouébo', 14 June, 17 Aug., 8 Dec. 1869: AVNC.

doubt loomed large with Guillain, as he was to leave the colony for France within a month. But certainly of greater significance was his painful recollection of the recriminations, both public and official, which his treatment of the Mwelebeng had provoked.²³ Several New Caledonians and New Hebrideans were tried for the murder of Europeans during 1869, and all escaped the death penalty.²⁴ The same applied to the Tea Janu. The instigators of the crime and those who were said to have struck the soldiers (seven men) were sentenced to indefinite expulsion from the colony (but not to imprisonment with hard labour); those who stole carbines or witnessed the massacre (eighteen men) received either one or two years' detention.²⁵

One cannot help but be struck by the cold-blooded expediency in Guillain's approach to the administration of

23

Guillain, address to the Conseil d'administration, 25 Feb. 1870: ANOM, Carton 93; 'arrêté du Gouverneur expulsant de leur tribu les assassins de Pongouesse', 25 Feb. 1870: BO 1870:164.

24

'Arrêté du Gouverneur plaçant les nommés Bouma, Mindivi et Diopahipi en surveillance à Chépénéhé (Lifou) pendant deux ans', 14 Jan. 1869: BO 1869: 54: these men were said to be the murderers of Bridon, a convict. It was believed that the evidence against them would be insufficient to condemn them in the courts and they were judged administratively by the governor (Conseil d'administration, 14 Jan. 1869: ANOM, Carton 91). 'Arrêté du Gouverneur rendant exécutoire l'arrêt criminel rendu le 28 février 1869 contre des indigènes de l'île Sandwich', 15 Mar. 1869: BO 1869:144-6: two New Hebridean men were sentenced to hard labour for life for the murder of a European man and a Melanesian woman and child; a New Hebridean boy received twenty years imprisonment for the murder of Auguste Déméné, Pierre's brother.

25 'Arrêté du Gouverneur expulsant de leur tribu les assassins de Pongouesse', 25 Feb. 1870: BO 1870:161-5.

justice to Melanesians in 1868 and 1869-70. The government's aim on the first occasion seems to have been vengeance and example. By 1869, however, the administration had become almost surreptitious in its desire to avoid adverse publicity, or a critical reaction in Paris. In both cases the questions of guilt or innocence, of motivation and justification, of the individuals involved, receded almost into insignificance beside those of how the cases might best be judged to achieve the desired result, what sentences were desirable or feasible, and what the possible effects might be. For all that, however, there is no doubt that to the Melanesians spared by Guillain's leniency in 1869-70, the question of the purity of his motives mattered not at all.

The three rebel tribes - Tea Janu, Maluma and Paak - had been declared disbanded and their lands confiscated early in 1869.²⁶ On their formal surrender each tribe agreed to pay an indemnity to the government of 3,000-4,000 francs, to be remitted in hours of labour; they provided a number of boys and girls as hostages; the tribes were reconstituted, were made subject to cantonement, and were given a provisional right to occupy certain lands for their current needs.²⁷ In many

26

'Arrêtés du Gouverneur ...', 20, 28 Feb. 1869: Mon., 21, 28 Feb. 1869.

27

E.g., 'Procès-verbal de la séance dans laquelle les indigènes de l'ancienne tribu des Tendianous ont fait soumission au Gouvernement colonial', 3 Oct. 1869: BO 1870: 173-6.

ways they received better treatment than the Bonde Christians who had dissociated themselves from the uprising. These people had been moved en masse to Pwebo, where they were kept virtually incommunicado for several months. They had been forced to give up their own territory, and were eventually amalgamated into the Mwelebeng tribe, but had still not been allocated lands at Pwebo by the time of Guillain's departure from the colony in March 1870. Food was scarce in the Mwelebeng tribe in 1869 because of the added demands of the refugees, and because the gardens had had to be neglected. Great hardship ensued and there were frequent deaths: 'nous enterrons presque tous les jours quelqu'un'.²⁸ Even after the end of the war the work of reorganization of the tribes and delimitation of their lands progressed slowly, although gardens could not be replanted nor villages rebuilt until this task was finished. It seemed to Améline that Mathieu deliberately postponed the reorganization of the Mwelebeng because they were Christian. The allied tribe of Cambwen was reconstituted first, then the war-ravaged tribes, then the allied tribe of Jawe and finally the Mwelebeng. The Puma do not at this stage seem to have been made subject to cantonement.

28

[Améline], 'Journal de Pouébo', 16 Feb., 24 Sept. 1869:AVNC.

Strong measures were taken to ensure the continued submission of the tribes of the Pwebo circonscription. It was divided into three districts, each dominated by one of the three posts of Uvanu, Ubac and Bonde. Each post was garrisoned by about forty men and Pons was named commandant of the entire circonscription²⁹ - an undeserved promotion for one who had done so much to provoke the uprising, and of whom the Teá Janu chief was supposed to have said: 'que c'était à lui qu'il en voulait et qu'il l'aurait tué s'il en avait eu l'occasion'.³⁰ The tribes were to be strictly supervised. Chiefs had to report regularly to the commandant of the nearest post, every village was to be visited at least twice a month by the commandant of one of the posts, and no Melanesian could leave his tribe for more than a fortnight without official authorization.³¹ Thus the system of confinement and restraint which was eventually extended to all New Caledonian tribes was born, while the rigid concept of the tribe as an administrative unit of the colony was formally implemented. The guidelines were set for nearly eighty years of second-class citizenship for a people who had every reason to conclude that the obligations imposed by their new nationality far outweighed the rights.

29

'Décision du Gouverneur fixant la composition des garnisons des trois circonscriptions du Nord', 3 Sept. 1869: BO 1869: 459-60; 'décision du Gouverneur réglant les rapports hiérarchiques des officiers commandant les trois détachements de la circonscription de Pouébo', 25 Nov. 1869: BO 1869:549-50.

30

[Améline], 'Journal de Pouébo', 29 June 1869: AVNC.

31

'Décision du Gouverneur p.i. divisant la circonscription de Pouébo en trois districts et réglant les attributions des Commandants de ladite circonscription et des districts', 31 Mar 1870: BO 1870:258-61.

CHAPTER VIILEADERS

FOUR of the previous five chapters have been concerned with a detailed regional study of the impact of nearly three decades of intensive culture contact on the peoples of north-eastern New Caledonia. The other examined the general European context in which culture contact occurred, specifically the relationship between colonial government and Marist missionaries. From the Melanesian viewpoint, culture contact operated in a context of dynamic traditional institutions and attitudes, which underwent further modification under the impact of contact. I have isolated two important facets of the traditional society: namely, the structure of authority and the roles of tribes and tribal chiefs; and land tenure. The nature and function of each was examined in Chapter I, to the extent that reconstruction of the institutions of a pre-literate society is possible, when the society in question has long been subject to European influence and a process of rapid acculturation. The remaining two chapters will consider both the ways in which traditional patterns affected culture contact and acculturation, and the way in which each of the two facets - the internal political organization of tribes, and land tenure - changed under the impact of European contact and as a result of distortions introduced by mission-

aries and administrators in pursuit of their particular goals. The focal point of the present chapter will be the role of chiefs under the colonial régime.¹

FEW Europeans in New Caledonia before 1870 came to grips with the question of the nature of chieftainship and its associated prerogatives and limitations. Even the most astute and sensitive observers, such as the naval surgeons Rochas, Vieillard and Deplanche, and the missionaries Lambert, Goujon and perhaps Montrouzier, either ignored or dismissed the important concept of fraternity. Even those few who perceived the familial basis of social and political organization almost always thought of the relationship between a chief and the members of a clan or tribe in European political terms.² A feudal analogy was often invoked. Thus Montrouzier spoke of 'une vraie féodalité':

... les Néo-Calédoniens étaient divisés
en deux classes séparées par un abîme:
les chefs et les sujets. Les chefs se
divisent en plusieurs catégories. 3

Vieillard and Deplanche used more modern, but even less appropriate terminology: 'la population de la Nouvelle-Calédonie peut se diviser en trois catégories: les chefs,

1

On the nature and role of chieftainship in traditional New Caledonian society, see above, pp. 14-34.

2

E.g., Rochas 1862:244-5; Glaumont 1889:74; cf. Lambert 1900:79-82.

3

Montrouzier 1860:47-8; see also Rochas 1862:244-5.

la bourgeoisie, et le peuple'.⁴ Whatever the wording, however, all such descriptions tended to stress the authority and rights of a chief at the expense of his duties. Even those observers who recognized limitations to a chief's power interpreted them in terms of the inability of a feudal lord to control a fractious nobility, instead of as the obligations of an 'elder brother' towards his extended family and its various members.⁵

The marks of deference shown to a chief were often regarded by Europeans as proof of the servility and fear of oppressed 'subjects' towards an absolute or quasi-absolute ruler. They were almost always seen as marks of a chief's authority, rather than as the natural corollary of the respect and affection borne for the 'elder brother' who was the teama or 'great son' of a clan or tribe.⁶ The following description by Durand of the prestige of a high chief was fairly accurate as far as it went, but he failed to understand the rationale behind actions and attitudes which to him seemed merely degrading:

Maître absolu de ses sujets, tous s'
inclinent devant lui; il a droit de vie

4

Vieillard et Deplanche 1863:66; see also Glaumont 1889:74.

5

Montrouzier 1860:48; Rochas 1862:244-5; Vieillard et Deplanche 1863:67; Patouillet 1872:134.

6

E.g., Erskine 1853:356; Glaumont 1889:75; see above, pp. 19-20.

et de mort. Le respect et la vénération pour le grand chef sont portés à leurs dernières limites. Sa case est pour ainsi dire sacrée. Ses volontés sont exécutées et ne sont jamais discutées. Les femmes le considèrent comme un dieu. 7

Further confusion occurred over the extent of the power of a tribal chief. The authority exercised by a high chief over the members of his own clan was usually assumed by Europeans to apply to all the clans in a tribe, whereas in general inter-clan relationships were a matter of negotiation between relative equals. Similarly, the New Caledonian tribe was usually seen by Europeans as an immutable political entity, rather than as a loose association of clans bound by common allegiance to a particular chief.⁸

It is, however, a mistake to claim that early European observers of New Caledonian society exaggerated the power and prestige of all tribal chiefs, or invariably attributed feudal or absolute authority to the institution of chieftainship.⁹ Indeed, as long as only the Balad area was known, chiefly authority appeared almost non-existent, and a state of virtual anarchy was thought to prevail.

D'Entrecasteaux, for instance, reported that the people

7

Durand to Min., 26 May 1860: ANOM, Carton 42.

8

'Arrêté du Gouverneur déclarant ... l'existence légale de la tribu indigène dans l'organisation coloniale de la Nouvelle-Calédonie', 24 Dec. 1867: Mon., 29 Dec. 1867; cf. above, pp. 8-14 on the traditional attributes of clans and tribes.

9

As Guiart does on occasions: e.g., Guiart 1954a:22.

designated as chiefs seemed to exercise no police function, and that their authority was insufficient to maintain good order. He commented, with some perspicacity, that the respect of the tribesmen for their chiefs seemed more like deference than subservience.¹⁰ The Marists' first impressions were much the same:

... ces rois sont à peu près sans influence, et une des causes auxquelles il faut l'attribuer, est, je pense, leur trop grand nombre; il n'est pas de si petit hameau qui n'ait le sien. 11

Later, experience of other areas, especially Yengen, modified and even reversed this view, and the European equation of chieftainship with either feudalism or absolute despotism became much more common. Such interpretations acquired general currency, even among relatively experienced observers, after the consolidation of the colonial régime, and reflected changes in the role of chieftainship which occurred as a result of mission and official policy.¹² Both

10

D'Entrecasteaux 1808, I:349; see also Forster 1777, II:431; Labillardière 1800, II:247; Sparrman 1953:166. Remarkably few European observers made the distinction between deference and subservience. Rochas and Goujon were two who did: Goujon, 'Journal de l'île des Pins', 12 Mar. 1849; Rochas 1862:243, 245-6.

11

Rougeyron to Supérieur-général, 1 Oct. 1845: APM/ONC, 26a; see also Laferrière 1845:106, 107 ('le chef Paiama ... a sur ses sujets une autorité plus morale qu'effective'; 'l'autorité s'y exerce d'une manière toute patriarcale, plutôt par le conseil que par aucun moyen de répression'); Pigeard 1846: 104; Rougeyron to Supérieur-général, 3 Sept. 1846: APM/ONC, 5c; Leconte 1847b:825-6; Montrouzier to his brother, 14 Oct. 1853: APM/Personal file (Montrouzier).

12

E.g., Mage, address to the Tribunal criminel de Nouméa, 27
cont. over page

the Marists and the administration sought to use chiefly authority to organize and control the Melanesian population - both parties therefore treated tribal chiefs as legally-constituted rulers, who each possessed some sort of abstract authority over a clearly delimited group of people, designated their 'subjects'. The mission attitude was important because of its effect in the Christian tribes, especially the Mwelebeng and the Kunye of the Isle of Pines, and because of the extent to which missionaries were able to influence the official viewpoint; the administration's attitude was obviously vital, because it was translated into the practice and the legislation on which the role of Melanesians in the colony came to be based. Thus in 1872 Jules Patouillet, who was generally an accurate and sensitive observer, could confidently refer to Bwarat's 'vaste territoire [sic] où il dominait en souverain absolu'.¹³ Similarly, Ulysse de la Hautière, Guillain's private secretary, depicted New Caledonians in 1863 as:

... fidèles travailleurs, "gent taillable, corvéable, et tuable à volonté"... ces pauvres opprimés, sans cesse soumis au caprice du chef, en leurs biens, leur vie, celle de leurs proches. 14

12 (cont.) Dec. 1867: Mon., 29 Dec. 1867; de la Hautière 1869:28, 30, 74; [C]olomb 1890:9.

13

Patouillet 1872:50; see also Moncelon 1885:4 ('... tyrans héréditaires'); Vincent 1895:19 ('le chef de tribu a toute la puissance d'un roi absolu').

14

De la Hautière 1869:29.

It is difficult to recognize these people as those whom Lambert, Rochas and Vieillard had known in the 1850's. The nature of the changes and the manner of and reasons for their occurrence will be the subject of the remainder of this chapter.

ONCE Europeans began to develop continuous relationships with Pacific islanders, it became useful for them to distinguish in each locality some personage who would provide protection, act as intermediary with the populace, and on whom responsibility could be placed for a breakdown in relations. The obvious person to fill this role was a tribal chief: 'quand on a un grand-chef pour soi, on est sûr tôt ou tard de réussir'.¹⁵ People sending representatives to New Caledonia usually stressed the need to placate and interest local chiefs, the more influential the better, in order to establish viable relations with the indigenous people. This applied equally to Sydney entrepreneurs, mission superiors, naval officers and government officials.¹⁶ At places like Yengen, Pwebo and the Isle of Pines, where the tribal group was larger than usual,

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[Forestier], 'Rapport sur la Nouvelle-Calédonie en 1860 et 1861', n.d.: APM/ONC, 19.

16

Towns to Silver, 15 Jan. 1847; Towns to Redmond, 16 Jan. 1847 ('be sure you do all you can to conciliate the native chiefs without they are on your side you will do nothing'); Robert Towns, Papers, Item 56; Shineberg 1971: 151 ('I always make it a rule to make much of the chiefs and have always found myself a gainer by it'); du Petit-Thouars to Laferrière, 20 Oct. 1843: ANOM, Carton 40, CG 1843; due Bouzet to Min., 22 June 1855: *ibid.*, CG 1855 ('On ne réussit guère avec ces

and the leadership of one clan unquestioned, the control required could be achieved by using existing chiefly authority. The desired effect was generally attained while it was in the interests of the chief, the council of elders and the tribe as a whole to promote peaceful dealings. At Balad, where tribal unity was weak, and conflicts between rival clans were rife, it was more difficult for Europeans to live with safety under the protection of a single chief, and the danger of antagonizing a particular clan by associating with its enemies was far more real there than at Yengen or Pwebo.

Tardy de Montravel quite clearly recognized the contrast between Puma and Mwelebeng in this regard, and concluded that the French would be able to dominate the entire Mwelebeng tribe by manipulating Bonu:

On ... trouve [les Mouhélébé] ... plus francs dans leurs allures et dans leurs relations que les gens de Pouma. Ils sont en même temps plus indépendants et plus jaloux de leur liberté, mais aussi plus esclaves du principe de soumission à l'autorité de leur chef. Ce trait de caractère me porte à penser qu'en continuant à diriger le chef effectif actuel, Hippolyte, dans la voie du progrès, il sera facile d'y conduire toute sa tribu. Par sa toute-puissante autorité, on organisera, j'en suis convaincu, la population entière pour le travail, avantage immense, que l'on ne saurait obtenir dans la tribu de Pouma, dont le chef n'a ni la confiance, ni l'estime des habitants.

17

16 (cont.) naturels que quand on gagne les chefs'); Rougeyron to Colin, [April 1858]: APO.

17

Tardy de Montravel to Min., 25 Dec. 1854: ANOM, Carton 40, CG 1854; see also Montrouzier 1860:35.

On the other hand, de Montravel did not entirely foresee that the same traits which he admired in the Mwelebeng - power, self-confidence, unity of interest and submission to a prestigious chief - would render the Yengen much more formidable opponents to European domination than were the Puma, whose clan rivalries provided a useful lever and led to the dissipation in intra-tribal squabbles of energy which might have been directed against the European occupation.

BEFORE 1853 the balance of power in contact situations between New Caledonians and European missionaries and traders lay firmly with the Melanesians, except for the few brief occasions on which missionaries were reinforced by the presence of warships or naval detachments. The only aspect of the contact situation over which Melanesians had no control was the high incidence of death from introduced diseases to which they had no immunity. This factor was especially relevant at Balad and Pwebo.

The annexation of New Caledonia and its geographical dependencies by France in September 1853 did not cause an immediate change in relationships between Melanesians and Europeans, nor in the social and political role of New Caledonian chiefs. Yet future developments were implicit in the earliest actions of the colonial authorities. Annexation was initially proclaimed by Febvrier des Pointes at Balad and the Isle of Pines. At Balad the immediate and purely

practical aim of the French was to obtain and enforce unquestioning acceptance of their authority in order to safeguard the garrison left there. The Puma were not called upon to take part in the annexation ceremony, and the chiefs were asked neither to sign the record of proceedings nor to give formal acquiescence to the act.¹⁸ Annexation was a fait accompli, and no lip-service was at that stage paid to the concept of a legal cession of sovereignty by Melanesians.

At the Isle of Pines, however, the presence of an English warship on a hydrographic mission led to the assiduous courting of the chief by the Marist missionaries and the French admiral.¹⁹ The chief's mark appeared on the official record of annexation, which declared that: 'l'île continuera à être gouvernée par son chef qui relèvera directement de l'autorité française'.²⁰ The chief was promised and later received a monthly allowance of 125 francs, to be paid as long as he fulfilled his obligations to the French.²¹ This

18

'Procès-verbal de la prise de possession de la Nouvelle-Calédonie et de ses dépendances par M. le Contre-amiral Febvrier des Pointes', 24 Sept. 1853: ANOM, Carton 67.

19

Febvrier des Pointes to Min., 19 Oct. 1853: ANOM, Carton 40, CG 1853; Tardy de Montravel to Febvrier des Pointes, 10 Jan. 1854 (encl. in Tardy de Montravel to Min., 15 Jan. 1854): ANM, BB4 701; Montrouzier 1860:50.

20

'Procès-verbal de la prise de possession de l'île des Pins par M. le C.a. Febvrier des Pointes', 29 Sept. 1853: ANOM, Carton 67.

21

'Attestation de M. le Capitaine de frégate de Bovis qu' une solde mensuelle de 125 fr. a été promise au Chef de l'île des cont. over page

clearly indicated the role envisaged for tribal chiefs under the colonial régime, and the French assumption that this role was a continuation of their traditional function in the context of a newly-established superior authority. Missionary influence was apparent, both in encouraging the acceptance of French sovereignty by the chief, and in influencing the official interpretation of his role.²²

During 1854 the sovereignty of France was proclaimed at several places around the New Caledonian coastline. The chiefs of seven tribes between Balad and Numea, including Puma, Mwelebeng and Yengen, formally accepted French sovereignty and promised to protect Europeans on the territory of their tribes.²³ In return they were guaranteed protection from enemy attack and fair treatment, especially regarding land. The Yengen were promised that they would not be compelled to become Christians against their will.²⁴ Undoubtedly

21 (cont.) Pins par M. le C.a. Febvrier des Pointes', 18 Jan. 1854: ANOM, Carton 67; du Bouzet to Min., 14 Feb. 1855c: ANOM, Carton 40, CG 1855; Directeur des Colonies to Min., 31 Aug. 1855: *ibid.*; Min. to du Bouzet, 31 Aug. 1855: *ibid.*

22

Tardy de Montravel to Min., 15 Jan. 1854: ANM, BB4 701; Directeur des Colonies to Min., 31 Aug. 1855: ANOM, Carton 40, CG 1855. The missionaries Goujon and Chapuy agitated strongly in favour of Vendegu's subsidy, and their signatures as witnesses appeared on de Bovis's official declaration, see above, fn. 21.

23

E.g., 'Reconnaissance et acceptation de la souveraineté de S.M.Napoléon III par Felipe Bouéone, Chef de la tribu de Pouma', 25 Jan. 1854: ANOM, Carton 67.

24

Tardy de Montravel to Min., 8 July 1854: ANOM, Carton 40, CG 1854.

the positive aspects of these transactions made more impression on Melanesians than the cession of sovereignty, which was a concept totally foreign to them.²⁵ Yet the implications of the transfer of sovereignty, while not immediately obvious, were nonetheless far-reaching. The administration invested tribal chiefs with some of the functions of French local government officials. Their authority was in many ways potentially greater than that wielded traditionally, but so were the demands made upon it. According to the missionaries the denial to the chiefs of the right to use force deprived them of the one means by which they could have imposed their will on their 'subjects'.²⁶ Yet the colonial government, mainly for administrative convenience, tended to hold a chief responsible for the maintenance of order within his tribe.

25

E.g., Kanala was one of the first areas to which sandalwooders had been attracted in the 1840's, and the local people had been quick to use their new-found wealth and power to oppress their neighbours. But eventually the exhaustion of sandalwood supplies at Kanala had caused the traders to go elsewhere and the balance of power had rapidly swung against the people of Kanala. Thus by 1853 the chief of this tribe was eager to accept French sovereignty: '[il] fut donc enchanté d'accepter la souveraineté de la France, dans l'espoir de vivre désormais en paix, et dès le lendemain de notre arrivée, lui et ses gens étaient tout entiers à notre dévotion' (Tardy de Montravel to Min., 8 July 1854: ANOM, Carton 40, CG 1854).

In 1856 Commander Edouard Le Bris, the commandant supérieur of the colony, commented in exasperation that 'les habitants semblent n'avoir qu'imparfaitement compris notre prise de possession' (Le Bris to Min., 7 Aug. 1856: ANOM, Carton 42).

26

Montrouzier to his brother, 14 Oct. 1853: APM/Personal file (Montrouzier); Tardy de Montravel to Min., 27 Apr. 1854: ANOM, Carton 40, CG 1854.

Although its practical impact was limited before 1862, this process began shortly after annexation, and it became the basis of official policy in the 1860's.

The transactions of 1854 implied that the European participants believed the Melanesian signatories to be competent to speak for and exact obedience from their 'subjects'. This viewpoint received legal expression early in 1854 with the promulgation of the Puma and Mwelebeng codes of law, after the chiefs of these tribes had formally renounced 'les lois et coutumes du pays'.²⁷ The codes incorporated most of the social, political and moral reforms which the missionaries believed essential. A clause enforced obedience to the tribal chief and his representatives, on pain of imprisonment:

Toute désobéissance au chef de la tribu ou aux personnes déléguées par lui pour veiller à la sureté publique sera puni, selon la gravité de la désobéissance, d'un emprisonnement de trois jours à un mois avec application aux travaux d'utilité publique. 28

This desire to create a centralized authority reflected the missionaries' past experience at Balad, and their frustration that the prestige of the chiefs and the deference in which

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E.g., 'Demande adressée par le Chef de la tribu de Pouma à M. Tardy de Montravel d'un Code pénal (Ecriture du R.P. Montrouzier, de la Société de Marie)', 7 Feb. 1854: ANOM, Carton 67; see above, p.74.

28

'Code pénal de la tribu de Pouma', 9 Feb. 1854: ANOM, Carton 67.

they were held did not provide a social control which the missionaries could have used to safeguard themselves and enforce the adoption of a new way of life and a new religion. The Marists' immediate aim was to reinforce the authority of the high chiefs and the position of the Christians in each tribe.

The French authorities saw the codes as a possible means to maintain order in these tribes with minimum expenditure of their limited resources. The punitive clauses had no sanction in tradition, however, and the chiefs, particularly at Balad, lacked the means and perhaps the will to enforce them. The refusal or inability of the administration at this time to intervene in the internal affairs of a tribe except in the case of open revolt and a complete breakdown of authority troubled the missionaries. They blamed the government for the ineffectiveness of the codes, and accused it of allowing a reversion to savagery and anarchy.²⁹

The rebuffs suffered by the Marists at Yengen at the hands of a powerful chief gave rise to an ambiguous attitude on their part towards chiefly authority, and affected the ways in which they attempted to influence government action towards this tribe. They advocated that the well-disposed, pro-Christian chiefs of Balad (before 1855), Pwebo and the Isle

29

Rougeyron to Min., 2 Aug. 1855: ANOM, Carton 40, CG 1855; see above, pp. 145-6, 150-1.

of Pines should become salaried officials of the régime, and their authority be supported by armed intervention when necessary:

... si ces chefs étaient gagnés à la France [sic], au moyen de quelques légères rétributions annuelles et de plus secondés dans l'occasion par les forces du Gouvernement, il n'est pas douteux que cette île ne changeât promptement de face et que ce peuple ne marchât à grands pas dans les voies de la civilisation. 30

On the other hand, the missionaries encouraged the government to curb the influence of Bwarat, whom they regarded as a threat both to Catholicism and to the peaceful imposition of French control in the north. This viewpoint dominated the official attitude to the Yengen until 1863.³¹

THE major implication of the actions of des Pointes and more particularly de Montravel was that tribal chiefs would be regarded as local administrative officers and intermediaries between the colonial government and the Melanesian population. This policy was not systematically applied, however, by the early governors and commandants of the colony. Indeed, between 1855 and 1862 French policy towards New Caledonian chiefs and the Melanesian population as a whole generally consisted of ad hoc solutions to particular problems. This resulted partly from the lack of clear and consistent directions from Paris, and partly from the fact that the

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Rougeyron to Min., 2 Aug. 1855: ANOM, Carton 40, CG 1855.

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See above, p.109.

resources at the disposal of the administration were so limited that a coherent plan of expansion and development could not be implemented. Several well-disposed chiefs, both Christian and pagan, were fostered by the government, and acted as military auxiliaries, guides and messengers for the French. They included Vendegu of the Isle of Pines, Titema of Manongwe, Gelima and Kake of Kanala, Bonu of Mwelebeng and Gwa of Puma. All benefited from their support of the French. Vendegu received his subsidy; Titema was paid for services rendered, he received a gift of cattle and a gold medal in recognition of his contribution to the cause of France, and his son was given some schooling at the colony's expense; Gelima, Kake and Gwa all received medals;³² Bonu was loaned firearms which helped him to advance the cause of Christianity and become the most powerful chief in the north by 1860. With these exceptions, however, only limited attempts were made to use Melanesians to further the development of the colony, or to interest tribal chiefs in its future, as Tardy de Montravel had envisaged.

The principle that chiefs were responsible for good order in their tribes was generally implicit in official attitudes and policies, but repressive measures tended to fall indiscriminately on entire villages or tribes. Between

32

BO 1853-8:44, 153, 289, 311; 1859-60:220; 1861:220; 1862:92.

1854 and 1862 at least thirteen separate punitive expeditions were sent against clans or tribes accused en masse of murder, pillage, insubordination to the authorities, or similar crimes. This figure does not include the expeditions in the 1856-9 campaign against insurgent tribes in the south, where the administration was best able to enforce its will. The southern tribes were banished from their lands, and were not finally pardoned until after the death or submission of their chiefs.³³ Similarly, the presence of a military post at Balad, and the weakness and disunity of the Puma meant that this tribe was also subject to French authority from an early date. Even in these areas, however, official intervention in tribal affairs only occurred after the outbreak of open hostility towards the French, their Melanesian allies, missionaries or settlers. Bweon of Puma was only replaced by Gwa, his long-time adversary, after leading an attack on the Balad post.

In most other parts of the colony, punitive expeditions were no more than isolated incursions into unpacified

33

Testard to Min., 29 Aug. 1868: ANOM, Carton 42; 'Décision du Gouverneur: les tribus des Jack, Kandio, Maké, Plum et Teaururus sont expropriées de leurs territoires respectifs. - Il leur est défendu, sous peine de mort, de revenir sur leurs territoires. - Les têtes des Chefs de ces tribus sont mises à prix', 10 June 1859: BO 1859-60: 110-11; 'Proclamation du Gouverneur adressée aux indigènes du Sud, et rendant leur territoire aux tribus de Jack, Kandio, Quindo et Maqué', 2 Dec. 1859: *ibid.*, 259.

territory. Generally there were few casualties, as Melan-
 esians refused open combat with an enemy possessing patently
 superior firepower.³⁴ On the other hand, there was almost
 always indiscriminate destruction of canoes and dwellings and
 devastation of gardens and coconut groves.³⁵ On occasions,
 however, individual chiefs were singled out for reprisals.
 Following an expedition in 1862, four Wagap chiefs were
 executed as rebels, while at other times chiefs were arrested
 and exiled to Tahiti.³⁶ The latter category included Bwarat
 of Yengen, who was kidnapped and exiled because of the threat
 he posed to the Mwelebeng and Tuo Christians. The govern-
 ment's aim in this case was less to assert French domination
 than to forestall or postpone the need to take firmer, more
 costly measures against this tribe. Subsequent interference

34

Three notable exceptions to this rule were an expedition of
 the Balad post against the Paak early in 1858, during which
 more than twenty Melanesians were said to have been killed
 (Testard to Min., 21 June 1858: ANOM, Carton 42); an expedi-
 tion against the people of Tipinje and Konguma at about the
 same time, in which about twenty warriors were reported to have
 died (ibid.); the Yengen expedition of September 1859, when
 the French claimed forty Melanesian lives (see above, p.123).

35

E.g., Le Bris to Min., 7 Aug. 1856: ANOM, Carton 42 (Wailu);
 du Bouzet to Min., 25 Aug. 1858: ANM, BB4 723 (Tipinje and
 Konguma); Mon., 8 July 1860 ('Mêa'); Durand to Min., 26
 Feb. 1861: ANM, BB4 797 ('Uitoé'); Durand to Min., 30 June
 1861 (Nakety), 25 Feb. 1862 (Wagap): ANOM, Carton 42.

36

Du Bouzet to Min., 16 Feb. 1855: ANM, BB4 723; Le Bris to
 Min., 7 Aug. 1856: ANOM, Carton 42; du Bouzet to Min., 13
 Mar. 1858: ibid.; Durand to Min., 25 Feb. 1862: ibid.

by the administration in the internal affairs of the Yengen tribe was minimal before 1862.

THE situation changed in several ways after Guillain's arrival in June 1862, as a result of his determination to lessen missionary influence amongst Melanesians, especially at Pwebo, and to implant respect for the authority of France and obedience to his own orders throughout the colony. Native policy under Guillain continued to some extent to evolve in response to specific situations. But the guidelines were drawn at the outset, and the methods used and the results attained were consistent with the aims and policies which he originally outlined.

The role of chiefs under Guillain was essentially that envisaged by Tardy de Montravel and implicit in the policies of the men who had annexed New Caledonia:

... là où l'autorité n'a pas de délégués, les chefs de tribus ... [étaient] naturellement responsables envers elle de ce qui se passe dans la localité et de l'exécution des ordres du Gouverneur ...

37

Within three months of taking office the governor had called the chiefs of twelve pacified tribes to Port-de-France for the celebrations of 15 August, the great public holiday of the Second Empire.³⁸ Few of these men had previously visited

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Guillain, 'De la Mission Catholique en Calédonie ...', 6 Apr. 1865: APM/ONC, 11.

38

The date was the anniversary of the birth of Napoleon Bonaparte.

the capital, and Guillain regarded their attendance as a demonstration of allegiance to the colonial régime, and as a symbol of their new role of government servants:

... les constituant pour ainsi dire
fonctionnaires du Gouvernement, au lieu
d'alliés plus ou moins indépendants
qu'ils étaient restés jusque-là. 39

The governor was almost certainly too sanguine about the significance of what to many of the visitors must have been merely a gesture motivated by curiosity to see Port-de-France. Nonetheless, the gathering was in at least one respect momentous, because the chiefs present accepted Guillain's labour and education proposals, which were to be the early focal points of his battle with the Marists for influence over Melanesians. The chiefs agreed to send a number of children from each of their tribes to Port-de-France to be trained as interpreters and tradesmen, and they agreed to the governor's demand for labourers for the government's public works programme.⁴⁰ Guillain attempted to buy cooperation with the promise that a chief would receive a 1 franc per month bonus for every worker supplied from his tribe.⁴¹ It is difficult to know to what extent individual

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Mon., 24 Aug. 1862; see also Guillain to Min., 11 Feb. 1863: ANOM, Carton 171.

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Mon., 7 Sept. 1862.

41

'Décision portant que des indigènes seront engagés pour travailler, à titre de manoeuvres, sur les chantiers du Gouvernement', 19 Jan. 1863: BO 1863:15-16.

chiefs were seduced by the bribe, but one reason for the unpopularity of the labour ordinance was probably the fact that it gave high chiefs power over their 'brothers' which traditionally they did not possess. Chiefs were made responsible for the replacement of defectors from their tribes, which caused resentment amongst workers and amongst those chiefs whose authority over their 'subjects' was insufficient to enable them to obey. A chief who refused to comply with the ordinance, or was unable or unwilling to replace deserters, brought severe chastisement upon both himself and his tribe. Thus the people of Yate suffered the devastation of their villages and gardens and the expropriation of their land, while their chief, who had refused to supply the required number of labourers, was deposed.⁴² A majority of the pacified chiefs cooperated, however, and within a year nearly two hundred workers had been provided.⁴³ Gwa of Puma was the first to respond, and earned a grateful governor's recommendation that he be awarded a medal; Titema of Manongwe returned a fair dividend on the investment of his medal by providing the largest contingent.⁴⁴

During 1863 Guillain negotiated the return to New

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See below, pp. 375-6.

43

Guillain to Min., 10 Aug. 1863: ANOM, Carton 26, CG 1855-64.

44

Guillain to Min., 11 Feb. 1863: ANOM, Carton 171.

Caledonia of the Melanesians who had been exiled to Tahiti by his predecessors. They included such old adversaries of the mission as Undo of Puma, Bwarat of Yengen and a man who had burned the Pwebo church in 1858. Guillain held great hopes for these people; he expected them to become his local agents in matters of tribal administration and his committed supporters in the campaign which he was about to launch against Marist influence in Melanesian affairs:

... j'ai pu espérer ... que dans ces grâciés, je trouverai d'utiles intermédiaires et des auxiliaires disposés à propager mes vues de conciliation et de civilisation. 45

Nor was he disappointed. According to Forestier the repatriates adopted a coldly pragmatic attitude to the mission/government conflict. They had no love for the administration which had stolen their liberty and exiled them from their tribes; they had even less for the priests whom they believed to have conspired to bring about their banishment, and against whose ideas and influence they had long fought:

Ces chefs ne sont pas moins hostiles au gouvernement qu'aux missionnaires; mais ils disent assez publiquement qu'ils profitent des dispositions du Gouverneur pour combattre le christianisme, et ils répètent unanimement que M. Guillain leur recommande avant tout d'empêcher qu'il ne pénétre dans leurs tribus. 46

45

Guillain to Min., 10 Aug. 1863: ANOM, Carton 26, CG 1855-64.

46

[Forestier], 'Notes sur la mission de la Nouvelle-Calédonie' [1865]: APM/ONC, 15b; see also Forestier to Procureur, 11 Oct. 1863: APO.

Other chiefs, such as Kawa of Pwe, who had fought for years against mission influence in the north, were encouraged to accept French sovereignty and become active auxiliaries of the government.⁴⁷ By the end of the decade Guillain possessed a solid core of committed allies, including Bwarat of Yengen, Mweau-Gwa of Puma (Gwa's successor), Gelima and Kake of Kanala, Mango of Kone, Aile of Wagap, Kawa of Pwe, Anle of Manongwe (Titema's son and successor), Jaot of Jawe and Dwima of Cambwen. Needless to say, these chiefs and the members of their tribes were almost without exception aggressively pagan or apostate. Their stance was an indication of successful adaptation to the conditions of European occupation, and proof that they had learned to differentiate the interests of various groups of Europeans, and to use strife between them to their own advantage.

Chiefs benefited from cooperation with the government, especially when they enjoyed sufficient prestige to be able to guarantee the acquiescence of their tribes. Guillain offered his supporters prestige, relative independence in matters internal to their tribes, opportunities for military action against both hereditary enemies and more recent foes, with the attendant attraction of rich plunder in the wake of expeditions. In return they had to obey, or give the appearance of obeying, the dictates of the government; to

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Mon., 14 May, 30 July 1865; Garnier 1871:263-4.

guarantee the cooperation of their tribes; to provide workers for Port-de-France and auxiliaries in expeditions against recalcitrant or insurgent tribes; to reject missionary influence and harass Christians and Marists where possible. None of this was any hardship to the allied chiefs, and the terms of their bargain with the governor must have seemed extremely favourable. They were almost always able to carry their tribes with them, because of the obvious benefits which all could derive from cooperation; the chiefs could in any case have called on assistance from the administration in the event of serious dissension within their tribes.

It therefore seems debatable whether the transition from independent allies to government functionaries, of which the Moniteur had boasted in 1862,⁴⁸ can be said to have been completed in the case of Guillain's pagan allies. In return for their military assistance and support in his anti-Marist campaign he found it expedient to allow them considerable freedom of action within their own tribes. Similarly, the land rights of the allied tribes generally remained intact, and their members were spared most of the burden of forced labour which during the 1860's caused such hardship for other pacified tribes, especially those which were subject to mission influence.

48

See above, p. 332.

In June 1865 Guillain promulgated the first of several decrees in which the role in the colony of tribes and tribal chiefs was defined. The decree in question regulated the administration of Uvea (Loyalty Islands), and divided the atoll into three districts based on traditional tribal allegiances, each district to be headed by a high chief.⁴⁹ The tribes were to function as local administrative units and their chiefs as intermediaries between the colonial government and the local people:

Art. 5: Chacun des grands Chefs est responsable de ce qui se passe dans son district, et rend compte au Commandant de Lifou. Il peut arrêter tout individu qui causerait du désordre ou qui refuserait de lui obéir; mais il doit être bon et juste avec tous et se considérer comme leur père.

The insistence on a high chief's right to absolute obedience from all members of a tribe, and on the paternalistic nature of the relationship between a tribal chief and his 'subjects' both rested on a complete misunderstanding of the concept of fraternity and the reciprocal rights and obligations of chiefs and tribesmen. Another clause in the same decree outlined the price which a high chief might have to pay for his enhanced authority, should he prove unable or unwilling to exercise it.

Art. 8: Tout Chef qui ne ferait pas exécuter

49

'Décision du Gouverneur portant division administrative, en trois districts, de l'île d'Ouvéa (Loyalty)', 25 June 1865: BO 1865:123-4.

les ordres du Gouverneur sera révoqué de sa chefferie et conduit à Port-de-France, car il ne serait plus digne de commander.

The administration had always assumed, and exercised with increasing frequency after 1862, the right to ratify, appoint, punish, suspend or depose chiefs, in keeping with the official concept of their role.⁵⁰ Where convenient, traditional succession was observed when a chief was replaced, since the administration wanted to use customary authority to further its own ends, rather than destroy it and be faced with the need to legitimize a new chief whose position was not sanctioned by tradition. Thus 'Evaristo' was appointed chief of Mwelebeng after the deposition of his cousin Warebat in 1867. But in some tribes, such as Puma and Wagap, the administration took advantage of contending factions and replaced a dissident chief with a member of a rival clan.⁵¹

Guillain's legislation had profound implications for the role within the colony of New Caledonian tribes

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E.g., the deposition of Bwarat of Yengen in November 1857; 'arrêté du Gouverneur prononçant la déchéance de l'indigène Damé de la chefferie de Yaté ...', 14 May 1865: BO 1863:106-8; 'par décision du Gouverneur ... l'indigène Moin'bou, s'étant mis en état de rébellion envers l'autorité coloniale, a été déclaré déchu de la chefferie de la tribu de Pokeureu', 4 July 1864: Mon., 10 July 1864; 'par décision du Gouverneur ... l'indigène Krio Gomb'bouha a été nommé chef de la tribu d'Ounia, en remplacement de Manganaki, décédé', 7 Sept. 1864: BO 1864:460.

51

'Arrêté du Gouverneur constituant le territoire de Houagape et en nommant le Chef', 14 July 1866: Mon., 22 July 1866.

and their chiefs. The most notable general result was to enhance chiefly authority at the expense of other dignitaries in a tribe, and to lessen the importance of consultation in determining tribal policy. In allied, pagan tribes, however, the practical effects on the relationship between chiefs and their 'subjects' appear to have been limited before 1870. In most cases the decision to cooperate with the administration seems to have been taken collectively by the tribe in council.⁵² Certainly Bwarat enjoyed such immense prestige that he was said to be able to exercise almost absolute authority within the Yengen tribe. Comments by contemporary observers, however, suggest that the extent both of his prestige and his authority were unusual: 'il est du très-petit nombre des chefs actuels qui ont pu conserver de l'autorité sur leurs sujets'.⁵³

Although the government had expressed clear intentions with regard to the function of tribes and their chiefs, by 1870 the most notable changes in the leadership patterns and the political, social and economic organization of New Caledonian tribes had occurred in places where missionary influence had long been accepted, and largely as a result of that influence. The most striking examples were on the Isle

52

Mon., 7 Sept. 1862.

53

Garnier 1901:225; see also Patouillet 1872:51.

of Pines and at Pwebo. The Isle of Pines chief Vendegu, who died in 1855, had for several years previously been well-disposed towards the missionaries, but had resisted conversion to Christianity. Like chiefs in other areas, including several at Balad and Pwebo, he refused to renounce polygamy because of the loss of face involved,⁵⁴ and he could not ignore the opinion of the tribal elders, who jealously guarded their own influence against the threat posed by the missionaries' insistence on monogamy and encouragement of chiefly absolutism.⁵⁵ On his deathbed, however, Vendegu was converted to monogamy and Christianity, and designated as his successor a small daughter by his chosen wife, to the exclusion of sons by other wives. He entrusted the child to the missionaries' protection, and nominated a 'regent' to run the tribe.⁵⁶ The Marists educated the child and insisted that she be referred to as 'queen'. The intrusion of a

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Du Bouzet to Min., 22 June 1855: ANOM, Carton 40, CG 1855; see also Gagnière to Supérieur-général, 18 Sept. 1853: APM/ONC, 21; Montrouzier to his brother, 14 Oct. 1853: APM/Personal file (Montrouzier); Tardy de Montravel to Min., 27 Apr. 1854: ANOM, Carton 40, CG 1854; Montrouzier to Procureur, 14 June 1859: APO; de Broglie to ? , 28 Dec. 1859: APM/ONC, 4.

55

Goujon, 'Journal de l'île des Pins', 15 Sept. 1854 ('Ils veulent nous garder pour les petits bienfaits matériels que nous leur procurons mais ils ne veulent pas se convertir. Je parle des principaux de la masse car ce sont ceux-là qui sont entourés de plusieurs femmes et ils ne veulent pas les séparer'); Durand to Min., 26 May 1860: ANOM, Carton 42.

56

Du Bouzet to Min., 22 June 1855: ANOM, Carton 40, CG 1855.

female into the chiefly succession was, in a male-dominated society, a sacrilege which could not be tolerated by the displaced male heirs or by the elders. The young 'queen' was only confirmed in her position by French intervention.⁵⁷ In the middle of 1856 an expedition was sent to the Isle of Pines to punish several chiefs whom the missionaries had accused of opposition to the 'queen'. Forty soldiers landed and burned a village, but there was no resistance and the only casualty was a chief who tried to escape from custody and was killed. Another chief was exiled to Tahiti.⁵⁸ The traditionalists gradually and unwillingly bowed to the superior power on which the missionaries, in the name of the 'queen', could call, and by the end of 1861 the whole island was Christian, and its population generally subservient to the 'queen's' advisers, who accepted missionary direction in both spiritual and temporal matters.⁵⁹ After 1862 the Pines people and their missionaries were harassed by Guillain and his aides, and were made to bear much of the burden of forced labour at Port-de-France. In general, however, they fared

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Vieillard et Deplanche 1863:68-9; Glaumont 1889:75.

58

Le Bris to Min., 7 Aug. 1856: ANOM, Carton 42.

59

[Forestier], 'Rapport sur la Nouvelle-Calédonie en 1860 et 1861', n.d.: APM/ONC, 19. In 1859 Saisset spoke of the need to decrease the power of the 'queen' and the quasi-protectorate which the missionaries had imposed on the Isle of Pines by establishing the authority of France there. (Saisset, 'Compte rendu de la situation de la Nouvelle-Calédonie et dépendances au 31 décembre 1859': ANOM, Carton 42).

better under Guillain than did the Mwelebeng: perhaps because of their relative isolation on a wholly Christian island; perhaps because the missionaries stationed there were less recalcitrant than Villard; perhaps because the important complication of European settlers was lacking on the Isle of Pines.⁶⁰

At Pwebo, the victories achieved over a pagan coalition by Bonu's mission-drilled troops enabled that chief to consolidate his authority over the Mwelebeng at the expense of Warebat, the 'first' chief. Neighbouring clans and small tribes, over which the Tinjin chiefs had traditionally enjoyed only nominal suzerainty, were forced into the Mwelebeng tribe and became subject to Bonu's, and by extension the missionaries' orders. The entire tribe was organized under Bonu's authority to produce such commodities as coconut oil and bêche-de-mer. Most of the proceeds were used in a common fund to finance church-building and other projects which the Marists believed to be of benefit to the community.⁶¹

There can be no doubt that the Marists regarded the customary limitations on chiefly absolutism, and the

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F. Palazzy, 'Journal de l'île des Pins', 1 Jan. 1865 - 13 Sept. 1866 passim: APM/ONC, 2c; P. Goujon & F. Palazzy, 'Journal de l'île des Pins', Oct. 1866 - 25 Feb. 1871 passim: ibid., 2b.

61

For the significance of these undertakings for the concept of common ownership of property and resources, see below, pp. 387-8.

flexibility and equality of the traditional relationships between the various clans in a tribe as serious drawbacks to the effective implantation of the European ideal of Christian civilization. Nor is there any doubt that they deliberately encouraged well-disposed chiefs to acquire autocratic control within their tribes. In 1866 Rougeyron explained this policy quite plainly:

Le Missionnaire n'est-il pas ... intéressé à soutenir le Chef? C'est une force qu'il doit ménager et dont il doit se servir pour le bien. La Mission l'a compris, aussi dans toutes ses stations s'est-elle étudiée à le relever. Au reste, c'était son devoir; car après avoir dit aux naturels: "Rendez à Dieu ce qui est à Dieu, elle devait ajouter rendez à César ce qui est à César". 62

In the same letter Rougeyron implied that high chiefs possessed absolute authority in the tribal context. This directly contradicted numerous complaints which he and his confreres had made in the past about the 'anarchy' which traditionally prevailed in New Caledonian tribes. The contradiction seems to have resulted from the fact that it was currently in the missionaries' interest to exaggerate the extent of chiefly authority, in order to refute Guillain's accusation that they had usurped the power of chiefs in Christian tribes:

Quant aux chefs, est-il bien vrai que nous les annihilons, en absorbant leurs pouvoirs?

Pour peu que l'on connaisse le prestige qui les environne et l'ascendant qu'ils exercent dans leurs tribus; ne doit-on pas regarder toute tentative d'absorption, comme peu adroite, impossible à réaliser par le Missionnaire, compromettante pour son oeuvre. 63

Within two years, however, the attempts of the administration to blame the events of October 1867 on an all-powerful Christian chief had caused Rougeyron, for reasons of expediency, to revert to the earlier interpretation:

... notre expérience de vingt et quelques années parmi les indigènes, nous apprend au contraire que souvent les petits chefs de villages s'arrogent et exercent à l'égard de leur sujets le droit de vie et de mort, à l'insu de leur grand chef. 64

Ironically, at the hearing before the Tribunal criminel de Nouméa in December 1867, the centralized system of tribal administration which had developed at Pwebo under Marist auspices was repeatedly described by the enemies of the mission as the embodiment of the traditional structure of authority in New Caledonian tribes. The intention of most of the European participants in the trial was to establish the responsibility of the Tinjin chiefs for the attacks, with or without missionary provocation, and to assert the principle that an entire tribe should be made to indemnify the victims of the belligerence of its individual members. This had important ramifications in two directions:

63

Ibid.

64

Rougeyron to Supérieur-général, 4 Feb. 1868: APM/ONC, 22.

on the role of a tribe and the structure of authority within it under the colonial régime; on the extent to which the administration would admit the concept of individual ownership of resources, especially land, by Melanesians. The first of these questions is elaborated here; the second is the subject of separate treatment in the following chapter.

The actual perpetrators of the attacks at Pwebo were depicted at the hearing as helpless pawns, who had only obeyed the orders of dreaded, autocratic chiefs, 'Martin' and 'Pierre', who were themselves the mere instruments of Warebat and his advisers. Warebat's crime was reviled as particularly heinous and treacherous, because he had been one of the first New Caledonian chiefs to accept French sovereignty and pledge his authority to the maintenance of order within the Mwelebeng tribe. In return, he had been granted the code of laws, which confirmed his authority over his 'subjects' and gave him the means to enforce it.⁶⁵ Hence, it was said, he must indubitably have known of the plot, even had he not actually provoked it. The concept of the absolute authority of chiefs was frequently invoked by the various counsel as the basis of the internal organization of a tribe:

65

Mage, address to the Tribunal criminel de Nouméa, 27 Dec. 1867: Mon., 29 Dec. 1867.

Les indigènes, vous le savez, sont groupés par tribus à la tête desquelles est placé un grand chef dont la puissance est absolue rien d'importance ne se fait en dehors de l'initiative de ce dernier ou au moins sans son autorisation. 66

The events at Pwebo were depicted as a reversion to a barbaric custom whereby the person chosen to carry out a chief's orders could disobey only at the cost of his own life:

L'autorité des chefs dans les tribus est très-grande, rarement leurs ordres sont méconnus par leurs subalternes, alors surtout qu'en exprimant leur volonté, ils fournissent en même temps l'instrument qui doit servir à l'exécution et qui ne saurait leur être rendu qu'après le fait accompli. 67

These descriptions, despite their exaggeration and errors, reflected the centralized system of administration which the missionaries had helped develop at Pwebo in order to facilitate their work. The descriptions also reflected the belief in an hierarchical structure of authority within tribes which was implicit in the actions and policies of Febvrier des Pointes and Tardy de Montravel, and which Guillaïn had previously legislated into existence in some tribes. The fact that such a system was claimed to exist was of greater relevance for future developments than the accuracy of the description in traditional terms.

66

Le Boucher, address to the Tribunal criminel de Nouméa, 28 Dec. 1867: Mon., 5 Jan. 1868.

67

'Acte d'accusation', Tribunal criminel de Nouméa, 12 Dec. 1867: Mon., 15 Dec. 1867;

THE administrative system which the missionaries and a Christian chief had formulated at Pwebo was subsequently applied to all the pacified tribes by gubernatorial decree, and became the pattern for the reorganization of the north-eastern tribes between 1868 and 1870. While the trial of the Pwebo suspects was still in progress, Guillain promulgated a decree which confirmed the legal existence of the tribe in the administrative hierarchy of the colony, and the role of chiefs within it:

... à sa tête se trouve un grand chef, à qui sont adjoints des chefs de village et des conseillers, qui'il choisit parmi les plus influents: tous ayant pour mission de veiller au bien général de la communauté; d'empêcher au moyen de l'autorité dont ils disposent et, au besoin, de l'appui des commandants de circonscription, que nul ne soit atteint dans sa personne ou dans ses biens.

68

As suggested earlier, the implications of these developments for Melanesians were profound, although not always apparent by 1870, especially in tribes on which the administration relied for support. The 'tribe', a rigid administrative grouping with a clearly defined place and role in the colony's hierarchy of governing bodies, supplanted as the main organizational unit of Melanesian society the clan or the traditionally loose grouping of clans which may be

 68

'Arrêté du Gouverneur déclarant, par voie d'interprétation des actes législatifs antérieurs, l'existence légale de la tribu indigène dans l'organisation coloniale de la Nouvelle-Calédonie', 24 Dec. 1867: Mon., 29 Dec. 1867.

referred to as a tribe. Furthermore, the 'tribe' under the colonial régime was subdivided into 'villages', which bore no necessary relationship to customary clan allegiances or settlement patterns. The clan, whose organic connection with the past generations through the medium of the ancestral lands had provided the focus of a person's existence, retained the affection and allegiance of most New Caledonians, and the clan chief remained the object of his brothers' 'très respectueuse affection fraternelle'.⁶⁹ But the colonial administration's stress on the tribe as the formal local government unit of the Melanesian people caused the clan to lose much of its practical raison d'être, a situation reinforced by the frequent disappearance of the necessary physical link between a clan and its ancestral lands, in the wake of the cantonnement of tribes.⁷⁰

By assigning the internal administration of pacified tribes to well-disposed chiefs, and by supporting their authority with force if necessary, the administration simultaneously invalidated traditional sanctions against the abuse of authority, and deprived the members of a tribe of the right to exercise them. The position of high chief was institutionalized as part of the administrative hierarchy of the colony, and, despite the provision in the 1867 decree for a council of notables, the importance of consensus in the internal decision-making process

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Leenhardt 1937:149.

70

See below, pp. 393-4.

of many tribes declined. Furthermore, the importance of the fraternal relationship between a chief and the members of a clan or tribe was ignored by Europeans, to such an extent that the term for 'brother' in the various New Caledonian languages came to mean 'subject'.⁷¹ In the short-term, much of the traditional complexity and flexibility of clan and tribal organization was lost, and a rigidly legalistic interpretation of the structure of authority became possible. From the 1860's Europeans, especially settlers, frequently complained that the excessive influence of tribal chiefs ('l'autocratie de ces tyrans héréditaires'⁷²) was a prime reason for the failure of attempts to assimilate Melanesians or to reconcile them to the role for which they were intended in the colony. Thus in 1868 Mathieu explained that:

... l'expérience nous révèle que, partout où la surveillance de l'Administration ne peut s'exercer, les indigènes sont livrés à l'arbitraire du chef dont la domination matérielle et morale est une cause de retard dans leurs progrès en tout genre. 73

Ironically, however, this comment appeared in a report which,

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Maurice Leenhardt explained this paradox in his vocabulary of the language of Wailu. Under 'Kamosari - La personne de la génération cadette', he remarked:

L'idée de sujet n'est pas dégagée - "Si je parle ma langue, je dis 'mes frères', si je parle français, je dis 'mes sujets'" (chef Henri Naiseline, de Maré, parlant en français, et déplorant cette traduction en usage et inadéquate). Mod.: Sujet, serviteur, domestique (Leenhardt 1935:131).

72

Moncelon 1885:3,4.

73

A. Mathieu, 'Rapport ... relativement à la constitution de la
cont. over page

by its reinterpretation of customary land tenure, was itself a key stage in the consolidation of chiefly absolutism.⁷⁴ Thus the concept of the 'subservience' of New Caledonians to tyrannical chiefs, which Europeans deplored, resulted both from a misunderstanding of customary relationships between a chief and his 'brothers', and from the changes which actually came about in this relationship as a result of missionary influence and government legislation.

Eventually, however, a new complexity evolved as a result of the deposition of dissident or ineffectual chiefs, and the voluntary abdication of others who preferred to avoid the pressures and responsibility of their new position. Real authority was not always exercised by official nominees, who were sometimes little more than figureheads, acting as intermediaries and buffers between the administration and the customary leadership of a tribe. For instance, Patouillet described how, as early as the 1860's, some chiefs had ceded the appearance of power to 'brothers' who understood French, in order that they should not be at the mercy of government interpreters, who were often unscrupulous, and who were frequently members of enemy tribes.⁷⁵ A former chief always continued to receive the

73 (cont.) propriété territoriale indigène', 22 Jan. 1868:
Mon., 26 Jan. 1868.

74

See below, pp. 383-5.

75

Patouillet 1872:130-1. E.g., a pagan interpreter attached to the Pwebo post boasted in 1866 that he had misled the governor during Bonu's interrogation and thereby brought about the chief's

cont. over page

deference due to his position, and his voice sometimes carried great weight in the councils of a tribe:

Des chefs ont mal rempli leur rôle; l'administration leur a ôté le titre de chef et les a remplacés par des Canaques, petits chefs ou sujets. Les chefs dépossédés n'en ont pas moins gardé leur influence; ils ne portent pas d'uniforme, mais ils gouvernent.

76

The new complexity has become more relevant since the Second World War, with the relaxation of paternalistic controls on Melanesians. The council of elders has again come to play an important role in the internal affairs of the New Caledonian tribe. In many areas today, including the municipality of Pouébo, a clear distinction is drawn between the position and influence of local government officials, such as the mayor, and the customary tribal leadership. In community matters the latter is almost always supreme. The position of Melanesians in present-day New Caledonian society, and the current problems which they face have obviously been shaped by events since 1870. But the working out before that date of European attitudes on the Melanesians' role in the colony, and of official policies for their supervision and control by a transformed traditional leadership, provided the foundation for future developments.

75 (cont.) exile (Villard to Rougeyron, 25 June 1866: APM/ONC, 25; Lambert to Rougeyron, 23 July 1866: *ibid.*, 20).

76

Vincent 1895:22; see also Rochas 1862:178, 243; Sarasin [1917]: 37, 77.

CHAPTER VIIILAND

THE question of land tenure is the most important single issue in the history of the impact of European government and colonization on the indigenous people of New Caledonia. It is a history of European disregard for, or at best reinterpretation of traditional land rights, balanced against an official desire to extend to Melanesians at least an appearance of justice, in regard to land claims. By 1870, however, such justice in the pacified regions, was largely determined by the need to delimit Melanesian land holdings clearly and efficiently, so as to free the largest possible area of good land for European colonization, both free and penal. The legal and administrative framework for the delimitation and disposition of land which had developed by 1870, and almost the whole spectrum of European assumptions on the extent and validity of Melanesian land rights were based to a greater or lesser extent on misconceptions about the nature of customary tenure. Furthermore, the legacy of the years before 1870, both in terms of attitudes and policies, formed the basic model for the practices and prejudices of later decades. Only in the years since World War II have Melanesians been able to escape from the

strait-jacket imposed by the policy of cantonnement, and the European assumptions on the nature of traditional land tenure which underlay it. Even today, tensions over land rights are acute in some reserves, while the pattern of Melanesian settlement and the mode of land holding still bear the imprint of policies applied before 1900, policies whose origins can be traced to the pre-1870 period. It is therefore essential for an understanding of later developments, as well as intrinsically important to this study, to examine the interaction before 1870 of the various Melanesian and European attitudes to the land question, and the policies of successive colonial administrators, culminating in Guillain's legislation of 1867-70, which laid the legal guidelines for the future. The unifying theme of this chapter is the impact and effect on the clans and tribes of north-eastern New Caledonia of colonial land legislation and the motives and opinions which lay behind it.

THE possibility of adapting traditional land tenure to the colonial situation was complicated by the existence of a dual system of property rights, which effectively encompassed most of the land area of the archipelago, and which differentiated land ownership from usufructuary rights, to say nothing of hunting, fishing and water rights.¹

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See above, pp.22-3; the best analyses of traditional land tenure are to be found in Lambert 1900:82-9; Salmon n.d.; Saussol 1971:227-30.

Proprietary rights, generally inalienable, were in theory vested in the clan which first settled a particular tract of land, but in practice they were based on possession, whether derived from presumed first occupancy, conquest, or cession by the master of the soil to outsiders who were absorbed into the clan. As 'great son' of a clan its chief administered but did not 'own' the clearly-defined tract of land which formed the clan's patrimony, and which symbolized the organic connection between the ancestors and the present generation. The profound psychological attachment of New Caledonians to the lands which contained the physical remains and spiritual presence of their ancestors was explained by a Melanesian priest:

...pour les aborigènes la terre est un Être Vivant et dans certain cas [sic], elle est même "divinisée", car elle porte dans son sein le corps et l'esprit des ancêtres.

2

Usufructuary rights, however, belonged to the individual who cleared the land, and were bequeathed to his direct lineage. Use rights to land, trees, waterways, fishing and hunting grounds could be transferred, with the approval of the clan chief, and the products of the soil became the property of the cultivator, who usually acknowledged his debt by a gift of yams. Transfers of use rights, however, did not affect the proprietary right of the possessor clan. The uncleared land

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Anova-Ataba 1969:207; see also Bourgey 1865:183.

which surrounded a clan's gardens belonged to the community, whose members could hunt and gather there without restriction, unless an individual member acquired use rights to a portion by clearing and cultivating it.

Thus traditionally the only land which was not individually owned was the uncleared and generally less fertile part of a clan's territory, and this alone could be ceded by the chief and the council of elders without the agreement of a usufructuary.³ All except the most inaccessible and sterile parts of the archipelago were therefore specifically owned; much was the uncleared, communal land of particular clans, but fertile agricultural land was almost always the dual property of the individuals in whom usufructuary rights were vested, and the proprietor clan. Under the colonial régime the dual system of land tenure resulted in two main areas of mutual misunderstanding and recriminations: namely, over the possibility of alienation of proprietary rights (the European concept of 'sale'), and the role of individual ownership of land. In both cases by 1870 the subtleties of the traditional polity had been legislated out of existence, and replaced by paternalistic controls which effectively left Melanesian destinies in the hands of the colonial administration and, at the lowest level of devolution of authority, of tribal chiefs. This

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Salmon n.d.

chapter will look mainly at the way in which European misconceptions affected official policy, and at the effects of official policy on Melanesian land holdings. Before 1860 misunderstanding centred on the implications of transfers of land by Melanesians. After this date the main issue was the reinterpretation of the nature of Melanesian land tenure which resulted from colonial legislation.

SOME of the earliest European descriptions of New Caledonian land tenure were surprisingly accurate, at least in general outline. In 1846 Rougeyron, whose experience at that stage was mostly limited to Balad, explained that the tribe's land did not belong to the chiefs, although they received 'une espèce de tribut' (the right of the first yams⁴), and that individual ownership of land was firmly established.⁵ Captain François Leconte, who owed his information mainly to missionary informants, elaborated on this description:

Les Nouveaux-Calédoniens possèdent chacun autant de terrain qu'ils en peuvent cultiver, et le chef du village dispose du reste, s'il le juge convenable.

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Both these accounts alleged the possibility of sale of land, but they also stressed the need for a prospective purchaser

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See above, p.24.

5

Rougeyron to Supérieur-général, 3 Sept. 1846: APM/ONC, 5c.

6

Leconte 1847b:827.

to disinterest both the appropriate chiefs and the actual proprietors; A copy of the bill of sale for the main mission property at Bayup is still extant.⁷ It listed twenty-three vendors including several chiefs, who all agreed, according to the document, to full and entire cession of the land in question. It is probable, however, that what the Europeans interpreted as sale, represented to the Melanesians a transfer of usufructuary rather than proprietary rights. The transaction may well have symbolized the adoption of the missionaries into the clan or tribe involved, which would have entailed hereditary usufructuary rights, but in neither case would existing proprietary rights have been alienated.

In all some 200 hectares (500 acres) were 'purchased' by the mission at Balad in return for a large quantity of trade goods, and during 1845 and 1846 Douarre also 'bought' large properties at Pwebo and Yengen. Although the Puma and the Mwelebeng forced the missionaries to leave their tribes in 1847, the Marists' continuing right to the land obtained at Balad and Pwebo does not seem to have been questioned. Similarly, the Yengen scrupulously recognized the cession they had made, although they consistently refused to accept the Marists' spiritual message.

7

Bill of Sale, 1 Oct. 1846 (copy encl. in [Forestier], 'Propriétés et biens de la Mission de la Nouvelle-Calédonie', 18 May 1860): APM/ONC, 3.

Thus the transactions by which the missionaries acquired land in these three tribes seem to have been mutually satisfactory to the parties concerned. The same cannot be said of the land on which the mission stations of Conception and St-Louis, near Port-de-France, were later established. Resentment over the loss of these lands was crucial in provoking the tribes of the region to armed resistance against the mission and the French in 1856-7.⁸ The conflict arose because the land in question was not acquired by the mission as a result of free and direct negotiation between the Marists and the Melanesian proprietors, but was granted by the colonial administration in total disregard of the claim of the previous owners. The official attitudes which underlay this and similar actions are central to an understanding of French land policy in New Caledonia before 1870.

THE formulation of an official policy towards Melanesian land rights was begun by du Bouzet in 1855. Du Bouzet's appreciation of the nature of traditional tenure was in many ways quite accurate. He recognized a division between individual, joint and common ownership, and stressed the limitations on chiefly authority over land:

8

Forget to Min., 15 June 1860: Collection Margry; [Foucher] 1890:10.

Les chefs ont la prétention d'être possesseurs du sol, mais ce droit ne leur est pas toujours reconnu. La propriété personnelle, comme la propriété indivise, sont très-définies; il faut l'intervention des intéressés pour qu'on puisse l'aliéner.... il n'y avait pas un cocotier qui n'eût son possesseur Quant aux terres communes, ce sont les forêts, les terres non habitées et non cultivées.

9

But du Bouzet made two assumptions regarding Melanesian land rights, which were of great significance for future policy. In the first place he did not regard the existence of clearly defined individual property rights as a serious impediment to colonization:

Je ne crois pas ... que tout cela nous empêche de nous procurer à très-bas prix les terrains propres à la culture, et déjà cultivés, dont nous aurons besoin.

10

In making this assumption he either underestimated or disregarded, as did most Europeans, the passionate attachment of New Caledonians to their garden lands, the patrimony of their clan, the source of life, and the symbol of the link between past and present generations, forever reiterated by the life cycle of the yam.¹¹ Second, he stressed that at any one time Melanesians actually cultivated only small areas of land. He thus distinguished between cultivated, or 'occupied'

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Du Bouzet to Min., 14 Feb. 1855b: ANOM, Carton 40, CG 1855; see also du Bouzet to Min., 20 June 1855: *ibid.*

10

Ibid.

11

Lambert 1900:86-9; Métais 1953a:114-5.

lands, which were to be regarded as Melanesian property, and communally-owned lands, forests, abandoned and uncultivated areas, which 'pourrant être considérées comme appartenant au domaine'. Thus basically he recognized no Melanesian rights to any except garden lands which were currently under cultivation.¹² In the light of this presumption he proclaimed in January 1855 that all 'unoccupied' lands, forests, construction wood and potential mines were part of the government domain.¹³

The concept of the 'unoccupied' lands, by far the bulk in area of the new colony,¹⁴ stemmed in part from the rotational system of traditional crop production, which resulted in large areas of fallow ground and apparently unused gardens.¹⁵ Many Europeans surmised that these were the traces of a dense population which had formerly occupied

12

Du Bouzet to Min., 14 Feb. 1855b: ANOM, Carton 40, CG 1855.

13

'Déclaration ... relative à la propriété et à l'aliénation des terres en Nouvelle-Calédonie et dépendances', 20 Jan. 1855: ANOM, Carton 67.

14

In answer to the Minister's question: 'Quelle peut être l'étendue des terres dont on peut disposer sans être obligé de les acheter?' du Bouzet replied: 'Elle est inconnue, mais elle est grande, surtout dans le Sud et dans l'Ouest, parties qui sont fort peu habitées' (du Bouzet to Min., 15 Mar. 1855: ANOM, Carton 40, CG 1855).

15

Saussol 1971:228.

the archipelago and later suffered a drastic numerical decline.¹⁶ Hence the area used (and therefore needed, according to the utilitarian criterion applied) by the present inhabitants was generally thought to be much less than it actually was. This misconception led to bitter Melanesian resentment, because it was de facto a pretext for expropriation, generally without indemnity, of vast areas of garden land, while its application upset the tenor of customary land use, and destroyed the balance which had existed between men and the soil.

Nonetheless, du Bouzet seems to have been genuinely concerned that Melanesians should be treated justly by their new masters. His letters, including those written before he left France, reiterated the high-minded, if naïve conviction that the colony would prosper in a climate of racial harmony if Melanesians were treated with what he saw as scrupulous fairness, especially in the matter of land and payment for services rendered:

16

Woodin 1852:325; du Bouzet to Min., 20 June 1855: ANOM, Carton 40, CG 1855; du Bouzet to Le Bris, 4 Mar. 1856 (encl. in du Bouzet to Min., 12 June 1856): ANOM, Carton 40, CG 1856; Montrouzier 1860:13-14; Moncelon 1887:97-8; Glaumont 1889:91, 113. Cf. Lambert 1900:85: 'il est important de ne pas confondre les biens incultes avec les biens vacants. Tout ce qui est plaine ou cultivable a ordinairement un propriétaire'.

Au début de notre établissement à la Nouvelle-Calédonie il me paraît nécessaire de nous concilier la population indigène en respectant le droit de propriété là où nous établirons, en gagnant les chefs par des présents et en rémunérant tous les services qui nous seront rendus par les naturels.

17

His edicts of 10 April 1855 and 1 June 1857 guaranteed that one-tenth of the rural land available for sale to colonists would be reserved for Melanesian use, affirmed the inalienability, except to the government, of the reserved and the occupied lands, annulled all transfers of land to non-Melanesians which had occurred before annexation,¹⁸ and declared that settlers could buy or lease land only from the administration.¹⁹ New Caledonians were never again to receive such generous treatment in respect of their land

 17

Du Bouzet to Min., 28 Mar. 1854: ANOM, Carton 40, CG 1855; see also du Bouzet to Min., 20 June 1855: *ibid.*: '... nous serons obligés d'user de grands ménagements quand nous aurons besoin de nous approprier ces terres [i.e., the "unoccupied" lands]'

18

This included the properties claimed by the mission, some of which had been acknowledged by Febvrier des Pointes in November 1853 (APM/ONC, 3). After investigation by a commission appointed by the governor, the mission's right to properties on the Isle of Pines and at Conception and Saint-Louis was recognized, as were those of two Englishmen, James Paddon and William Underwood, who had settled in New Caledonia before annexation ('Arrêtés du Gouverneur...', 30 Mar., 23 Apr. 1855: ANOM, Carton 68; 15 Dec. 1857: ANOM, Carton 69). The mission's title to its other properties, however, remained in dispute until after Guillain's departure from the colony (see above, p.226). The large properties at Conception and Saint-Louis were free grants under fairly onerous conditions, which had later to be modified as unrealistic. The same applied to several large grants made to settlers.

19

'Décision portant règlement sur les concessions de terres en Nouvelle-Calédonie', 10 Apr. 1855: ANOM, Carton 68; 'décision réglementant les concessions de terre', 1 June 1856: ANOM, Carton 69.

claims, as by the late 1860's du Bouzet's distinction between occupied territory and the reserved portion of the domain had been conveniently mislaid. His measure was by then interpreted as having guaranteed Melanesians one-tenth of all land in the colony,²⁰ and had in any case been superseded by later legislation which promised them only the land 'reconnus nécessaires' for their needs.²¹

Even during du Bouzet's term of office, however, his policy did not in general achieve its aim of reconciling the indigenous population to the new régime, because what seemed like justice to him seemed anything but to Melanesians. The main sources of friction have already been outlined. Du Bouzet believed that New Caledonians would sell their lands for a pittance. His reasoning had both humanitarian and utilitarian consequences: direct purchase of land by settlers from Melanesians was forbidden in order to prevent the latter from squandering their birthright, and to keep control of European settlement and a lucrative source of revenue in the hands of the government;²² moreover, it was believed that all land claims outside the occupied and reserved territory

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A. Mathieu, 'Rapport ... relativement à la constitution de la propriété territoriale indigène', 22 Jan. 1868: Mon., 26 Jan. 1868.

21

'Arrêté du Gouverneur portant règlement sur les concessions de terre en Nouvelle-Calédonie', 1 Oct. 1859: BO 1859-60: 181-92.

22

Du Bouzet to Min., 20 June 1855: ANOM, Carton 40, CG 1855.

would be easily and cheaply dispensed with.²³ Inevitably the utilitarian aspects of the argument had most appeal for land hungry potential colonists.²⁴ Unfortunately for the French, du Bouzet's original premise was false, since what he and Europeans in general²⁵ regarded as cheap sale, Melanesians considered to be the transfer of short-term usufructuary rights. Thus in 1856 Le Bris bemoaned the obtuseness of a chief who did not seem to realize that in accepting goods in exchange for land, he had renounced the right of continued occupancy:

J'ai eu dernièrement l'occasion de faire une concession de terrain ruraux pour fonder une habitation sucrière à M^r Bérard ... J'ai été moi-même présider à son établissement, je crois avoir à peu près réussi à faire comprendre au Chef qui se disait possesseur du terrain qu'en acceptant en échange de sa propriété les objets que lui donnait M^r Berard, il renonçait au droit de continuer à y vivre. Eh bien! malgré toutes ces précautions et notre voisinage je redoute toujours quelques mésintelligences entre le nouveau et l'ancien propriétaire.

26

His fears were timely, as shortly afterwards the colonist in question and twenty-seven of his companions were murdered by enraged tribesmen led by the dispossessed chief. The mutual lack of comprehension demonstrated by this example perplexed and distressed both parties, and sadly disillusioned du Bouzet.

23

Du Bouzet to Min., 15 Mar. 1855: *ibid.*

24

E.g., Lascazas, 'Projet de colonization pour la Nouvelle-Calédonie', 27 Feb. 1855: *ibid.*

25

E.g., Mer to Min., 4 Oct. 1860: ANOM, Carton 42.

26

Le Bris to Min., 7 Aug. 1856: ANOM, Carton 42; see also Le Bris to Min., 28 Oct. 1856: ANOM, Carton 40, CG 1856.

The violence and bitterness of the Melanesian reaction to European encroachment in the late 50's convinced him that they were a vicious and treacherous people, who interpreted conciliation as weakness and understood the meaning of force alone.²⁷ He did not cease to maintain the necessity to avoid large-scale dispossession of Melanesians, but he no longer stressed the need for justice; rather he invoked the practical impossibility of protecting colonists from revenge at the hands of expropriated tribes.²⁸

The second source of friction inherent in du Bouzet's land legislation stemmed from the distinction between 'occupied' and 'unoccupied' lands, and an unintended corollary, the fact that in the short term at least, the inhabitants of well-populated areas stood a better chance of retaining most of their lands (because they might be expected to resist expropriation more fiercely and more effectively) than did those in more sparsely settled areas. Du Bouzet reiterated that the northern and eastern regions of the main island seemed likely to be unproductive for colonization because of the density of the indigenous population, whereas the south and west, especially the area around Port-de-France, were

27

Du Bouzet to Min., 10 May 1857, 27 Feb., 10 Mar. 1858: ANOM, Carton 42.

28

Du Bouzet to Min., 25 Nov. 1857, 10 July 1858: *ibid.*

highly promising because there were so few native inhabitants.²⁹ And yet it was the tribes in the neighbourhood of Port-de-France which produced the first great uprising in the history of the colony, and tribes of the western coast and hinterland which led the way in the great revolts of 1878 and 1917.

The inhabitants of the Port-de-France region were apprehensive about the general encroachment of Europeans on to their lands, and specifically resentful about the concessions made to the mission at Conception and St-Louis, and to a group of colonists at Mont d'Or. In October 1856 a series of isolated murders began, which culminated in the assassination of thirteen European settlers and fifteen Efatese labourers at Mont d'Or and fierce attacks on the mission establishments.³⁰ After many strenuous, expensive and destructive expeditions, the remnants of the tribes responsible, or accused of participation, were finally pardoned in December 1859, and allowed to resettle on a small part of their former territory.³¹

29

Du Bouzet to Min., 15 Mar., 20 June 1855: ANOM, Carton 40, CG 1855.

30

[Foucher] 1890.

31

'Proclamation du Gouverneur adressée aux indigènes du Sud, et rendant leur territoire aux tribus de Jack, Kandio, Quindo et Maqué', 2 Dec. 1859: BO 1859-60:259.

Despite the costs, the French learned at least three important lessons from this war. First, they soon realized that their enemy would rarely meet them in open combat, despite a large numerical advantage, because the insurgents possessed too few muskets to be able to match the firepower of the French and their Melanesian auxiliaries. The French were thus forced to develop and refine the technique of attrition - villages and gardens were sought and destroyed as soon as they were built, and the hunted tribes were eventually reduced at least as much by hunger and the strain of a fugitive existence as by military action. Second, the French at once adopted a policy of using Melanesian auxiliaries, mainly Christians from Conception and the warriors of Manongwe, to augment the small garrison of marines and sailors.³² Native allies and auxiliaries were subsequently to play a central role in the repression of intransigent tribes throughout the colony.

Finally, a vital by-product of the war in the south was the acquisition by the administration of a large area of land which had previously been occupied by the insurgent tribes. Frequent expeditions forced these people to flee their lands and take refuge in more inaccessible areas.³³

32

[Foucher] 1890: passim.

33

Du Bouzet to Min., 10 May, 10 Dec. 1857: ANOM, Carton 42; [Foucher] 1890:14, 78.

In June 1859 they were formally expropriated by Governor Saisset,³⁴ by which time settlement of colonists in the region was already well under way. No one in Port-de-France was unaware of this useful corollary of armed repression:

Il est vrai que le résultat définitif de toute guerre sera de faire le vide et de donner par la destruction ou la dispersion des chefs beaucoup de terrain disponible.

35

Moreover, as settler pressure on available land grew in the 1860's, this realization may have disposed the administration to take extreme measures in circumstances where tough language and a demonstration of power would have sufficed to enforce obedience. The treatment of the people of Yate in 1863³⁶ and of the Paak and the Maluma in 1867-8 are cases in point.

THE official attitude in Paris towards the question of Melanesian land rights was, it seems, at best intended to give the appearance of justice towards the traditional occupants. In the Ministry of the Navy and Colonies the theoretical justification for annexation was expressed in

34

'Décision du Gouverneur: les tribus des Jack, Kandio, Maké, Plum et Teaururus sont expropriées de leurs territoires respectifs', 10 June 1859: BO 1859-60: 110-11.

35

Forget to Min., 15 June 1860: Collection Margry; see also Garnier 1901:214: 'une des conséquences de ces révoltes des indigènes est qu'on s'empare aussitôt après de toutes leurs terres pour y installer des colons'.

36

See below, pp. 375-7.

terms of the natural right of a civilized nation to claim sovereignty over the lands occupied by 'des peuplades sauvages':

Les habitants non civilisés d'un pays n'ont sur ce pays qu'un droit de domination restreint, une sorte de droit d'occupation ... Une puissance civilisée acquiert en établissant une colonie dans un pareil pays un droit péremptoire sur le sol, ou, en d'autres termes elle acquiert la faculté d'éteindre le titre primitif.

37

In practice this reasoning was translated into the distinction between 'occupied' and 'unoccupied' lands. Within the limits of this doctrine local administrators were frequently enjoined to deal fairly with Melanesians in respect of land claims. The main consideration of the policy makers, however, was less the demands of natural justice or the good name of France as a colonizing power than the desire to acquire land for European settlement quickly, cheaply and without provoking Melanesian resistance which would necessitate expensive and laborious repression.³⁸

Ideally settlement was to be limited to areas where the protection of Europeans could be assured. Those who

37

Min. to Ministre des Affaires Etrangères, 22 Feb. 1854 (draft): ANOM, Carton 40, CG 1854. An analogy was drawn with British practice in New Zealand, where such a policy was said to have been implemented.

³⁸Min. to Febvrier des Pointes, 28 Feb. 1854: ANOM, Carton 40, CG 1854; Directeur des Colonies, 'Rapport à l'Empéreur', December 1858 (draft): ANOM, Carton 42; Min. to Durand, 18 Feb. 1860 (draft): ANOM, Carton 25.

ventured beyond the secured parts of the colony (the southern third by 1860) were to be responsible for their own safety:³⁹

Les colons sont avertis qu'ils s'établissent à leurs risques et périls et que le Gouvernement entend ne leur garantir aucune protection en dehors du rayon d'action naturel de nos postes et établissements.

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This stipulation broke down for several reasons. Most traders and many would-be colonists refused to be thus restricted,⁴¹ while the missionaries had long had stations beyond the pacified region. Harassment and murder of Europeans, wherever it occurred, could not be ignored by the colonial administration, because to do so would set too dangerous a precedent. Furthermore, the adverse publicity which such a policy would provoke outside the colony would

39

Min. to Ministre des Affaires Etrangères, 22 Feb. 1854 (draft): ANOM, Carton 40, CG 1854; Min. to Durand, 15 Mar. 1860: ANOM, Carton 25.

40

'Dépêche ministérielle...', 30 July 1862: BO 1862:196; see also du Bouzet to Min., 6 Jan. 1857: ANOM, Carton 40, CG 1857; Min., 'Rapport à l'Empereur sur la colonisation de la Nouvelle-Calédonie', 15 Feb. 1858: BO 1853-8:243; Durand to Min., 20 July 1859: ANOM, Carton 42.

41

Du Bouzet to Min., 25 Oct. 1857: ANOM, Carton 42; Guillaïn to Min., 30 Apr. 1863: ANOM, Carton 26, CG 1855-64; 27 Aug. 1869: ANOM, Carton 166; Conseil d'administration, 14 Jan. 1869: ANOM, Carton 91.

retard its development⁴² and greatly embarrass a home government, which, although a dictatorship, became increasingly sensitive during the 1860's to the nuances, inferred or actual, of public opinion.⁴³ Few serious colonists would be attracted to New Caledonia unless they were guaranteed ample protection,⁴⁴ but before 1862 most emigrants were not serious settlers, but petty traders, or people who wanted to own land, but lacked either the resources or the application to exploit it.⁴⁵ Moreover, by 1860 there was little suitable land still available to settlers in the pacified region, partly because of the policy of large concessions which had been adopted in Paris and to a lesser extent in Port-de-France,⁴⁶ and partly because of

42

Vial d'Aram & C^{ie} to du Bouzet, 1 July 1857 (encl. in du Bouzet to Min., 22 Aug. 1857): ANOM, Carton 42; du Bouzet to Min., 25 Aug. 1858: ANM, BB4 723.

43

Case 1954:270-5.

44

Saisset to Min., 26 Feb. 1861: ANOM, Carton 42; Guillain to Directeur des Colonies, 10 Sept. 1867: ANOM, Carton 166.

45

Le Bris to Min., 7 Aug. 1856: ANOM, Carton 42; du Bouzet to Min. 25 Oct., 25 Nov. 1857, 29 Jan. 1858: *ibid.*; Testard to Min., 23 Apr. 1858: *ibid.*

46

E.g., 40,000 hectares to Brown & Byrne - never taken up ('décret impérial ...', 17 Feb. 1858: BO 1853-8:244-9); 500 hectares to Darnaud ('décret impérial...', 23 Aug. 1858: *ibid.*, 258-60); 570 hectares to Adam, 4,000 hectares to Paddon, 3-5,000 hectares to Joubert ('arrêtés du Commandant particulier ...', 19 Dec. 1858: *ibid.*, 312-17); 2,000 hectares to Cheval ('arrêté du Commandant ...', 23 May 1861: BO 1860-1:202-6; 'décret impérial ...', 28 Nov. 1861: *ibid.*, 181-4). The Marists also held two large properties near Port-de-France.

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the aridity of much of the south. Before 1862 the local government allowed only small concessions to colonists in such fertile but densely populated areas as Kanala and Wailu, because of its reluctance to displace large numbers of Melanesians, or to alienate powerful but well-disposed tribes.⁴⁷

The men on the spot soon became convinced of the impracticality in New Caledonia of large unbroken concessions of land on the Australian pattern.⁴⁸ In 1858, however, the imperial government made a vast grant of 40,000 hectares to an Australian company (Brown and Byrne), which would stretch virtually from coast to coast, and include some of the most populous parts of the island.⁴⁹ Du Bouzet

Several concessions (e.g., Darnaud's) were later revoked because the conditions under which they had been granted (such as the import of a certain number of European settlers, permanent buildings to a certain value, a certain area under crops or grazed, etc.) were not fulfilled in the specified time.
47

Du Bouzet to Min., 20 June 1855: ANOM, Carton 40, CG 1855; 25 Nov. 1857: ANOM, Carton 42; Testard to Min., 23 Apr. 1858: *ibid.*; du Bouzet to Saisset, 25 Oct. 1858: ANOM, Carton 231; Saisset to Min., 13 Feb. 1859: ANOM, Carton 42; Mathieu to Durand, 22 July 1861: *ibid.*

48

Du Bouzet to De Bris, 4 Mar. 1856 (encl. in du Bouzet to Min., 12 June 1856): ANOM, Carton 40, CG 1856.

49

'Traité entre le Ministre ... et M. Alexander Brown senior et M. Byrne, pour la colonisation de la Nouvelle-Calédonie', 17 Feb. 1858: BO 1853-8: 244-9.

strenuously opposed the project, on the grounds that such a grant would necessitate the expropriation of entire tribes, and would invariably provoke bitter resistance: 'Je crois qu'il faut renoncer à faire des concessions d'une aussi grande étendue tout d'un bloc'.⁵⁰ The scheme eventually lapsed, but the Ministry's predilection for large-scale enterprises apparently remained. During the 1860's a long controversy ensued with Guillain over the Minister's intention to grant a large tract of land in the Diahot valley to a French company. Guillain's opposition was expressed in much the same terms as du Bouzet's, but he ultimately failed, and a somewhat smaller grant was approved in 1870.⁵¹

ONCE a coherent plan had been formulated for the future of the colony, its administration reorganized and Guillain appointed as governor to oversee the beginning of a new era,⁵² it was virtually certain that the French desire to accord justice

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Du Bouzet to Min., 25 Nov. 1857, 10 July 1858: ANOM, Carton 42
51

Conseil d'administration, 6 Aug. 1869: ANOM, Carton 91; 'arrêté du Gouverneur promulguant une décision ministérielle accordant 6,000 hectares de terres en location, avec droit de préemption, à MM. Ménier frères, Courtin et C^{ie}.', 5 Aug. 1870: BO 1870:444. One of the Ménier brothers was a friend and supporter of the mission (Rougeyron to Procureur, 4 Jan. 1861: APO), but it is not recorded what the Marists, sworn upholders of Melanesian property rights, thought of his land claims.

52

Guillain to Min., 6 June 1862: ANOM, Carton 26, CG 1855-64.

to Melanesians, always equivocal, would be subordinated to the twin gods of efficiency and European land hunger. In Paris during the 1860's the official attitude vacillated between a desire to speed the development of the colony in order that it should eventually become self-sufficient, and the need to minimize current expenditure and commitment of forces to the lowest possible degree. Guillain, like his predecessors, recognized the incompatibility of these demands,⁵³ but he brought to the position a ruthless energy and a clarity of vision which they perhaps had lacked, and with which he was to achieve much, despite the parsimony of his superiors and their hostility towards many of his actions and policies. His strengths of character were, however, marred by a rigid authoritarianism and an arrogant pride, which divided the European population of the colony into mutually antagonistic pressure groups, and worse, reduced Melanesians to mere instruments of policy, who would refuse at their peril to adapt themselves and their institutions to the role for which they were intended.

Not long after his arrival, Guillain passed a new edict regulating the alienation of land to settlers.⁵⁴ It

⁵³ E.g., du Bouzet to Min., 25 Aug. 1857: ANOM, Carton 42; Durand to Min., 20 July 1859, 31 Aug. 1860: *ibid.*; Saisset to Min., 20 Nov. 1859: *ibid.*; Guillain to Min., 4 Aug. 1862: ANOM, Carton 26, CG 1855-64; Guillain, 'Rapport', [1868]: APM/ONC, 22.

⁵⁴ 'Arrêté du Gouverneur sur l'aliénation des terres domaniales en Nouvelle-Calédonie', 5 Oct. 1862: BO 1862:145-52.

contained no specific reference to Melanesians, but the administration later pointed out that it had implicitly maintained the rights guaranteed in earlier legislation.⁵⁵ In fact, du Bouzet's specific provision that one-tenth of all land offered for sale in the colony should be reserved for Melanesians, in addition to the lands they actually occupied, was quietly disregarded. By 1862 Melanesian land rights were limited to the 'occupied' lands, a nebulous concept which was liable to varying interpretations, and which in practice made New Caledonians dependent on administrators' estimates of their requirements. Needless to say, as the century progressed the size of these estimates tended to decrease in inverse proportion to the urgency of the demand for land for colonization.

That even the restricted right to the 'occupied' lands was subject to the requirements of government policy was amply demonstrated by the Yate affair of 1863-4. The partly Christian Yate tribe and its chief, Dame, ran foul of the governor by their unwillingness to cooperate with his compulsory labour ordinance. A punitive expedition was sent against them, and on the approach of the soldiers they abandoned their dwellings and fled. This, according to Guillain, was traditionally prima facie evidence of hostile

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'Arrêté du Gouverneur déclarant ... l'existence légale de la tribu indigène ...', 24 Dec. 1867: Mon., 29 Dec. 1867; 'Rapport ... relativement à la constitution de la propriété territoriale indigène', 22 Jan. 1868: Mon., 26 Jan. 1868.

intent, and an acknowledgment of defeat at the hands of a superior force. The huts and gardens of the Yate people were accordingly devastated, Dame was dismissed from the chieftainship and the tribe's land was declared confiscated to the profit of the domain.⁵⁶ In 1869 the same pretext was used to justify the dispossession of the people of Bonde.

Early in 1864 the land acquired at Yate was appropriated for the governor's pet project, an agricultural commune of twenty immigrant workmen, who were given a free grant of 300 hectares and loans on generous terms. It was expected that the dispossessed tribesmen would return to work as labourers on their former land.⁵⁷ Despite much effort and expense by the administration, however, the experiment was not a success, partly because the members of the commune lacked agricultural experience and expertise,

56

'Arrêté du Gouverneur prononçant la déchéance de l'indigène Damé de la chefferie de Yaté, et la confiscation du territoire occupé par sa tribu', 14 May 1863: BO 1863: 106-8; Guillain to Min., 31 May 1863: ANOM, Carton 26, CG 1855-64; Rougeyron to Procureur, 16 June 1863: APO. Guillain's action met with wholehearted approval in Paris; his report of the affair bore the annotation in red ink: 'Il a bien fait', and a ministerial despatch informed him: 'J'apprécie les considérations que vous avez fait valoir pour justifier ces mesures auxquelles je donne mon appréciation' (Min. to Guillain, 21 Aug. 1863: ANOM, Carton 26, CG 1855-64).

57

'Arrêté du Gouverneur autorisant l'association agricole de Yaté'; 'arrêté du Gouverneur portant concession, à titre gratuit, de 300 hectares de terres situés, à Yaté, à la Société agricole de ce nom', 8 Jan. 1864: BO 1864:5-7; Mon., 10, 17, 31 Jan. 1864.

and partly because the enterprise owed far more to Guillain's enthusiastic Fourierism than to a genuine acceptance of socialist principles by those actually involved.⁵⁸

The contrast between the governor's lavish concern for the commune and his callous disregard for the rights and future of the dispossessed Melanesians reflects poorly on his proclaimed socialism, and on the implications of such apparently generous programmes as the following, which appeared at about this time in the Moniteur, over the signature of a government functionary:

Effacer l'impression qu'a laissée l'emploi des armes, n'est chose réalisable qu'en amenant les indigènes à une grande communauté d'intérêts avec les colons, en les considérant comme citoyens, en leur accordant tous les droits qu'ils peuvent, toutefois, exercer sans danger pour le bien public En un mot: protection égale à tous. Si l'indigène possède, aux termes de la loi, respect à sa possession ou à sa propriété; s'il travaille, respect et rémunération à ses efforts; s'il se crée une famille, vénération aux liens qu'il a formés ... il devienne le frère et l'ami du colon, et non un esclave anonyme.

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58

Conseil d'administration, 7 Feb. 1865: ANOM, Carton 89; 14 Jan. 1867: ANOM, Carton 90; 27 Oct. 1870: ANOM, Carton 92.

59

T. Mage, 'De l'influence du Ministère public sur la civilisation et le progrès d'une colonie naissante', Mon., 20 Dec. 1863; see also Mon., 13 Dec. 1863.

Apart from the Yate incident, however, the question of Melanesian land rights only came to the fore in the late 1860's, and then mainly as a result of Guillain's determination to prepare the way for the extension of European colonization in the north by reorganizing the tribes of the region and delimiting their land holdings. Years before Du Bouzet had pointed out the incompatibility of large land grants with the maintenance intact of Melanesian land holdings, and Guillain reasoned similarly. During his early years as governor he consistently refused to approve large grants, to which he was in any case temperamentally and ideologically opposed.⁶⁰ By the end of 1867 he had rejected four out of twenty-two applications for concessions,⁶¹ and had instructed his local commandants to divert prospective colonists from Melanesian garden lands or coconut groves, unless the occupants proved willing to renounce all their claims.⁶² Two of the rejected applicants, however, made their grievances heard in France,⁶³ and the vehemence of their protests caused Guillain to alter his policies. At a time

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Forestier to Procureur, 7 Nov. 1863: APO; Guillain to Directeur des Colonies, 10 Sept. 1867: ANOM, Carton 166.

61

Mathieu, 'Rapport ... relativement à la constitution de la propriété territoriale indigène', 22 Jan. 1868: Mon., 26 Jan. 1868

62

'Circulaire du Secrétaire colonial', 28 Aug. 1865: Mon., 29 Dec. 1867.

63

Conseil d'administration, 28 Feb. 1867: ANOM, Carton 90.

when he was embroiled in bitter conflict with the Marists, he would presumably have preferred not to alienate powerful settler interests, which were his natural allies against the mission because of the general resentment against the size and quality of Marist land holdings and their involvement in commercial activity.⁶⁴

· Provided Melanesians did not offend his sensibilities (e.g., by being Christians), did not inconvenience his plans or resist his orders, when his reactions could be implacable, Guillain was willing enough to treat them justly, according to his lights, and even defend them against the depredations of land-hungry Europeans. He was consistently loyal and generous to such devoted allies as the Kanala, the Manongwe, the Yengen and the Puma, partly as a matter of policy, but also in grateful recognition of services rendered. The agitation of the settler lobby and his own desire to put colonization on a sound footing were sufficient, however, to lead him to plan the rationalization of Melanesian land holdings in the areas settled by Europeans, especially places such as Pwebo, where it would serve the dual purpose of diverting criticism and harassing a Christian tribe. He had begun to speak in these terms even before the upheavals in the north-east in 1867-9 provided him

64

See above, pp.230-3.

with the opportunity to reorganize the tribes of this region and make them subject to the policy of cantonnement.

Guillain outlined such a policy in the administrative council early in 1867. He spoke of the necessity to delimit lands sufficient for the needs of the allied southern tribes of Manongwe and Kanala, where all vacant land had been conceded to settlers. He added:

Il faut donc penser à délimiter aussi leur [the Mwelebeng's] territoire, à les cantonner dans une espace suffisant même en vue de leur culture tout à fait primitive, et à donner cours aux demandes des colons audelà du cantonnement.

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The implications of cantonnement were several and important. It was to deprive Melanesians of land which they actually occupied, and thus deny them the basic right which they had been guaranteed by du Bouzet. Furthermore, the traditionally scattered pattern of settlement, based on the family unit and centred on the garden lands of particular clans was to be formally replaced by concentration in villages, based on the artificial administrative unit of the tribe. According to official policy Melanesian land was to be communal property, vested in the tribal unit and controlled and

 65

Conseil d'administration, 28 Feb. 1867: ANOM, Carton 90.

administered by the tribal chief. Thus the complex traditional system of inalienable clan proprietary rights and clearly defined individual usufructuary rights was broken down, and the tribal chief, his authority already enhanced in other directions by government policy, was given power to which he was customarily not entitled over the most basic and often sacred aspect of Melanesian existence. This was yet another manifestation of an official policy which, whether deliberately or inadvertently, tended to destroy the flexibility of traditional political relationships and invalidate safeguards against chiefly autocracy.

In December 1866 Guillain had ordered legislation to be prepared defining Melanesian property rights,⁶⁶ but the legal framework for cantonnement was eventually devised under the impact of the Pwebo affair of October 1867, in which resentment at the expropriation of tribal lands for the benefit of colonists had provoked a violent reaction by the dispossessed clans. The key legislation was twofold. In December 1867 the 'tribe' was proclaimed to have legal existence as an administrative unit of the colony.⁶⁷ This

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Mathieu, 'Rapport ... relativement à la constitution de la propriété territoriale indigène', 22 Jan. 1868: Mon., 26 Jan. 1868.

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'Arrêté du Gouverneur déclarant, par voie d'interprétation des actes législatifs antérieurs, l'existence légale de la tribu indigène dans l'organisation coloniale de la Nouvelle-Calédonie', 24 Dec. 1867: Mon., 29 Dec. 1867.

edict was drafted specifically in response to questions which had arisen during the concurrent trial of the Mwelebeng suspects, and aimed to establish the collective responsibility of an entire tribe for acts of belligerence by its members. The process of erosion of Melanesian individuality, which had long been implicit in official policy, became explicit. A month later Guillain promulgated a decree which formally constituted Melanesian landed property, and which was to set the precedent for future land legislation.⁶⁸

By this decree every tribe was eventually to be granted inalienable possession of a reserve carved from its traditional territory, the size to be proportionate to the fertility of the soil and the number of inhabitants. No rights of private property were recognized, and division of the land amongst the individual members or families of a tribe was to be the prerogative of the tribal chief, who was also granted the use of a specific terrain, designated 'terre de chefferie'. A pretext for future expropriation of reserve land was provided by a clause which allowed resumption by the government in the public interest, with or without indemnity depending on whether the land was deemed to be 'occupied' or not. An edict of the same date delimited

68

'Arrêté du Gouverneur relatif à la constitution de la propriété territoriale indigène', 22 Jan. 1868: BO 1868:17-21.

the reserve of the Manongwe tribe.⁶⁹ It was allotted 1,624 hectares in four separate parcels, plus 100 hectares for the personal use of the chief.

The rationale behind the decree on Melanesian land was expounded by Mathieu in a report to the administrative council proposing the legislation.⁷⁰ Its provisions were said to have been adapted from traditional polity:

Dans presque toute l'île, elle [la propriété territoriale indigène] paraît être, au moins nominalement, personnelle aux chefs de tribus; toutefois par la manière dont ils usent de ce privilège, c'est en réalité une propriété indivise et commune à la tribu.

By this reasoning, du Bouzet's description of the simultaneous existence of individual, joint and common ownership of land was incorrect:

La propriété territoriale individuelle paraît avoir été en Calédonie chose fort peu connue.... il n'y a là rien de semblable à la propriété foncière telle que l'entendent les peuples civilisés.

The final comment was apt enough, but for reasons very different to those suggested by Mathieu.

Ironically, in the same report Mathieu stressed that inalienable land ownership was a transitional, tutelary measure designed to conserve Melanesian land holdings until

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'Arrêté du Gouverneur délimitant le territoire de la tribu des Manongwés', 22 Jan. 1868: BO 1868:21-2.

70

Mathieu, 'Rapport... relativement à la constitution de la propriété territoriale indigène', 22 Jan. 1868: Mon., 26 Jan. 1868.

such time as they were sufficiently civilized to be entrusted with their own destinies and property. Similarly, he criticized the arbitrary and autocratic power of tribal chiefs, 'dont la domination matérielle et morale est une cause de retard dans leurs progrès en tout genre'. And yet this very decree destroyed traditionally sanctioned individual property rights, and consolidated chiefly autocracy by giving them power over the distribution and use of land to which they had no customary right. These paradoxes seem to have resulted from two unrelated causes. In the first place Mathieu believed that traditional occupancy was almost always a consequence of military victory: 'le droit du plus fort était la base du droit de posséder'. He based this assumption on the evidence of the post-contact territorial expansion of two groups of clans, those in the area of Numea and Païta, and those led by the war chief Gondu in the centre-north of the island.⁷¹ In both cases, however, the aggressive clans had previously occupied inadequate and infertile lands, and were impelled as much by necessity as by greed. Furthermore, the territorial ambitions of the former group seem at least to some extent to have been inspired by their acquisition of improved weaponry,

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On Gondu, see above, p.114, fn. 82; on the clans near Numea and Païta, see Bourgey 1865:179-83.

including firearms, as a result of dealings with European sandalwood traders.⁷²

It is perhaps not surprising that such dramatic examples should make a profound impression on European observers, but stress on the aggressive activities of these clans obscured the far more usual pattern of peaceful migrations and absorption of newcomers into occupant clans by mutual agreement. Mathieu's preoccupation with the unusual caused him to ignore entirely the traditional role of masters of the soil, and the frequent occasions on which even conquerors left them unmolested, through fear of alienating the spirits of the land with which they were in communion.⁷³

The second and perhaps more significant source of Mathieu's misunderstanding of the nature of traditional land tenure would seem to have been the situation which had developed in some Christian tribes by the mid-1860's, notably Mwelebeng, although he did not himself admit this. The suggestion is supported by the arguments put forward during the first hearing before the Tribunal criminel de Nouméa in December 1867. As with chiefly authority, the system of land ownership was grossly misrepresented by one counsel, in terms very similar to those which Mathieu was to use in his report of the following month. The lawyer, Théodore Mage, claimed that Melanesians knew nothing of individual ownership of land,

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Guiart 1963:649-51.

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See above, pp.26-9.

that all landed property, the produce of the soil, and thus the wealth of the tribe and its members, were held in common, and were administered solely by the chief:

Sauf de rares exceptions, spéciales à nos possessions des Loyalty, les indigènes sont ignorants de la propriété territoriale individuelle: le patrimoine personnel n'y est point constitué, et le sol où s'élève une case particulière n'en fait pas moins partie de l'apanage commun de l'être collectif nommé tribu. Un grand chef (Téama ou aliki), s'inspirant de l'avis de quelques conseillers de son choix, administre seul l'universalité des biens immobiliers et des produits de la terre: il désigne l'emplacement des habitations et des cultures; il préside à la distribution, par village, de la récolte générale; et, de petits chefs, ses simples agents, en font ensuite la distribution par tête.

74

Mage was inspired to adopt this interpretation by his role as counsel for the European claimants, whose only chance of obtaining damages lay in the court's acceptance of the concept of common tribal responsibility to reimburse the victims of attack by its individual members. Nonetheless, as has already been seen, the administration officially adopted an almost identical interpretation, and Mage's statement cannot therefore be dismissed as the over-zealous hyperbole of a lawyer anxious to win his case.

 74

Mage, address to the Tribunal criminel de Nouméa, 27 Dec. 1867: Mon., 29 Dec. 1867.

For all his misrepresentation of the role of tribal chiefs, and the nature of traditional tenure, and his virtual denial of the existence, let alone the importance, of the clan, Mage's model was a caricature of the situation which had developed at Pwebo under the authority of Bonu and Villard. The missionaries had encouraged the acceptance of a concept of common ownership of resources, under the direction of the chief, as an antidote to what they termed the 'primitive communism' of Melanesians. Traditionally the demands of hospitality and fraternity imposed on an individual the duty to share his possessions and his provisions with his 'brothers'. This was regarded as a severe handicap to missionary efforts to inculcate an ethic of achievement through hard work, and militated against their attempt to develop new needs in Melanesians which would serve to make them more receptive to a European and Christian way of life:

Ce fléau social, avec ses hideuses et désolantes conséquences, tyrannise les tribus de nos îles. Ici il faut tout partager ... Le communisme est assurément un des plus grands obstacles qui s'opposent aux efforts des missionnaires pour améliorer la position physique et moral de ces tribus, et les faire jouir du bienfait d'une civilisation chrétienne.

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The centralized organization of the production and sale of coconut oil and bêche-de-mer was intended as a means to

overcome this problem, as well as provide resources for community projects such as church-building and clothing the faithful.⁷⁶ Careful control of the produce of the gardens, through the agency of the chiefs, was imposed to prevent the dissipation of supplies in the great ceremonies which traditionally followed the yam harvest, or celebrated important events in the life of the group and its members. But the customary exchange at such ceremonies of foodstuffs and other items, over which the chief presided, was very different from the sole administration in the hands of the chief of all landed property and the products of the soil, which was claimed to exist in 1867.

As with chiefly authority and land tenure, Melanesian settlement patterns were also redefined by the experts at the 1867 hearing. One of the defence counsel confidently asserted that New Caledonians 'ne se tiennent pas isolés les uns des autres, mais au contraire réunis, groupés'.⁷⁷ This contradicts the evidence of almost every early observer, who stressed that the Melanesian population lived in scattered hamlets, the largest of which contained only a few families.⁷⁸ It would be tempting to attribute yet another misconception to the model which had developed at Pwebo and in other Christian

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See above, pp.222-4.

77

Le Boucher, address to the Tribunal criminel de Nouméa, 28 Dec. 1867: Mon., 5 Jan. 1868.

78

See above, p.7.

tribes. And, indeed, the traditional pattern of settlement in these areas had been disrupted by the missionary policy of gathering their followers around the local chapel, which became the nucleus of a large village containing several clans. This facilitated regular worship and the surveillance of the faithful, and afforded mutual protection.⁷⁹ But the transition from small hamlets to large villages also occurred very early in such areas as Kanala and Yengen as a result of prolonged contact with European traders,⁸⁰ and can in no sense be regarded as a development confined solely to the Christian tribes, although it was more pronounced and more general in Christian areas. It can be said, however, that the higher mortality rate which afflicted Christians throughout the 1850's and 60's⁸¹ almost certainly owed much to their crowded living conditions, in which infection could spread unchecked. It is also not unjustifiable to surmise, despite the lack of concrete supporting evidence, that the high death rate, low birth rate and declining population which Melanesians throughout the colony suffered well into the twentieth century⁸² was in part a result of the extension of cantonnement, and the crowding of people into large villages where they were far more vulnerable to contagious disease.

79

Tardy de Montravel to Min., 25 Dec. 1854: ANOM, Carton 40, CG 1854; Mon, 26 Feb. 1860.

⁸⁰ On Yengen, see above, p.89; on Kanala, see du Bouzet to Min., 14 Feb. 1855a: ANOM, Carton 40, CG 1855.

⁸¹ E.g., the measles epidemic of 1860-1 seems to have taken most disastrous effect in the Christian tribes: Goujon to Procureur, 8 Oct. 1860; Montrouzier to Procureur, 12 Nov. 1860; Rougeyron to Procureur, 14 Nov. 1860, 1 Jan. 1861; Forestier to Procureur, 7

Guillain ordered the application of cantonnement to the Mwelebeng after the 1867 uprising,⁸³ and in the aftermath of the war of 1868-9 the decree of January 1868 was applied to all tribes of the Pwebo circonscription, except the Puma. The decree had provided for the delimitation of a reserve on a tribe's traditional territory, but in practice the territorial provision was often ignored, or at least was not applied to individual clans, which were shuffled about to suit the demands of government policy. The upheavals of 1867 and 1868-9 had caused widespread dislocation of the settlement patterns of the entire region. Several Paak and Maluma sub-tribes and all the Pareman clans except the people of Cambwen and Jawe had fled their lands or been moved en masse at the behest of the government.⁸⁴ These voluntary or compulsory migrations, and the formal dissolution and expropriation to which the three rebel tribes of Tea Janu, Maluma and Paak had been condemned, provided an administrative pretext for widespread reorganization

Aug. 1861: APO; Mathieu to Durand, 22 July 1861: ANOM, Carton 42.

82

Métais 1953a:128.

83

Guillain to Bourgey, 11 Nov. 1867 (encl. in Guillain to Min., 4 Dec. 1867): ANOM, Carton 166.

84

[Améline], 'Journal de Pouébo', 21 Nov., 16, 17 Dec. 1868: AVNC; A. Mathieu, 'Rapport... au sujet de la formation de la tribu de Tchambouène ...', 6 July 1869: Mon., 5 Sept. 1869; Mathieu, 'Rapport... au sujet de la formation de la tribu de Diaoué', 8 Dec. 1869: Mon., 6-13 Mar. 1870.

and the arbitrary regrouping of clans in new tribal units, which bore little relation to traditional patterns.

The main aims of government policy were twofold: to 'rationalize' Melanesian land holdings on a quasi-permanent basis, so as to free the largest possible area for colonization; to reduce the influence of the Christian Tinjin and Paak chiefs. With the latter in mind, all the Pareman clans except the Caagac⁸⁵ speaking people of Cevit and Pwe-Kabarik were separated from the Mwelebeng and incorporated into the independent tribes of Jawe and Cambwen.⁸⁶ The Paak tribe was similarly truncated. The Christians of Tande and Pwalu, who had dissociated themselves from the 'rebellion' of their chief, were resettled at Pwebo and eventually incorporated into a newly constituted Mwelebeng tribe, together with the Maluma sub-tribe of Welis.⁸⁷ The people of Mwandin, apostate members of the Paak tribe, and committed allies of the government, were rewarded with separation from the Paak and inclusion into the favoured Puma

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Caagac is the Mwelebeng language.

86

'Arrêté du Gouverneur constituant la tribu de Tchambouène (circonscription de Pouébo)', 3 Sept. 1869: BO 1869:456-7; 'arrêté du Gouverneur constituant la tribu de Diaoué (circonscription de Pouébo)', 28 Feb. 1870: BO 1870: 183-4.

87

'Arrêté du Gouverneur constituant la tribu des Mouélébés (circonscription de Pouébo)', 28 Feb. 1870: BO 1870:168-70.

tribe.⁸⁸ In the same vein, a Maluma sub-tribe which had won official approbation by its ready abandonment of its tribal chief and support of the French cause, was attached to the allied Cambwen tribe.⁸⁹

It thus seems certain that the administration deliberately adopted a policy of polarizing Christians or Christian sympathizers and the pagan allies of the government. To the extent that the 'tribe' as an official administrative unit of the colony was an artificial creation, the transfer of clans from one tribe to another need not have seriously infringed traditional allegiances, as long as the integrity of clans and their land holdings were maintained. Furthermore, in each case the detached clan or sub-tribe was an outlying group whose traditional dependence on the tribal chief, be he Tinjin, Paak or Maluma, was fairly tenuous, and in some cases unwillingly endured. For instance, the Pareman clans which were split from the Mwelebeng tribe probably accepted the new dispensation gladly enough, since they had originally been forced by circumstances and crusading Mwelebeng Christians into an unnaturally dependent relationship with the Tinjin.

88

'Arrêté du Gouverneur incorporant les gens de Muendine (ex-Paiacs) dans la tribu des Poumas (circonscription de Pouébo)', 28 Feb. 1870: BO 1870: 192-3.

89

Mathieu, 'Rapport ... au sujet de la formation de la tribu de Tchambouène ... ', 6 July 1869: Mon., 5 Sept. 1869; 'Etat nominatif des indigènes proposés pour des récompenses...', 1 July 1870 (encl. in Ruillier to Min., 2 July 1870): ANOM, Carton 171.

To this extent the reorganization can be seen as a reversion to a situation more nearly approximate to the traditional status quo, while the liberation of the people of Jawe from Mwelebeng hegemony was an act of justice. In other respects, however, the government's measures were arbitrary and harsh, especially towards the Christians. The cantonnement of the Mwelebeng was interminably delayed, which caused unnecessary hardship for the refugee clans.⁹⁰ Furthermore, in the land settlements of 1869-70 in which tribal reserves were delimited, the Paak fared very badly. Améline complained that they were allotted insufficient land, most of which was of poor quality,⁹¹ while a traveller in 1871 described their reserve as 'miniscule', and commented:

Le sage arrêté de M. Guillain, qui dans la délimitation des tribus, accordait suivant la nature du terrain de 2 à 5 hectares par personne, a été complètement éludé et méconnu en ce qui concerne la tribu de Bondé 92

The main effects of cantonnement and the decree of January 1868 were to perpetrate what Saussol had called 'the continuing administrative fiction of collective common property',⁹³ and, as far as the resettled Paak and Maluma clans were concerned, to divorce actual occupation of land from

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[Améline], 'Journal de Pouébo', 24 Sept., 18 Oct. 1869: AVNC.

91

Ibid., 25 Nov. 1869.

92

Dauzat, 'Une excursion dans la vallée du Diahot': Mon., 31 May 1871.

93

Saussol 1971:232.

tradition. Thus the intimate psychological connection between a clan and its ancestral lands was severed, and groups of people were relocated on lands to which they had no customary title, where they became dependent on the generosity of established clans, which enjoyed the position of masters of the soil. In both respects clear precedents were set for future policies of expropriation and oppression of Melanesians.

No doubt Guillain's successors were not dependent on precedent, especially when it came to arbitrarily resettling tribes to suit administrative convenience. But his concept of common ownership of resources and his denial to Melanesians of individual property rights was a vital contribution to the colony's legal framework, and one which owed much to his personal ideological position. Like so many of Guillain's native policies his land measures contained both humanitarian and exploitative elements. They combined a paternalistic desire to protect certain Melanesian rights, with a ruthlessly pragmatic determination to mould Melanesians to meet the demands of his programme, whatever the cost. He no doubt quite genuinely believed that the assurance of inalienable land rights protected Melanesians from the reckless dissipation of their reserved lands. And in view of the potential for conflict inherent in the differing Melanesian and European attitudes to the concept of sale, this may well have been a wise measure, at least on a temporary basis.

Inalienability, however, had been guaranteed by du Bouzet long before Guillain appropriated it as a central feature of his own policy. And there seems to be no necessary reason why inalienability, a measure with certain traditional validity, should have been combined with the denial of individual property rights, which were also sanctioned by tradition, and with the exaltation of chiefly power over land, which was not.

Guillain's land decree did not find favour in Paris. In his instructions to Guillain's successor the Minister of the Navy criticized both its actual provisions and the rationale behind it. He stressed the need to individualize Melanesian property in order to facilitate its transfer to settlers; he criticized the arbitrary power over the division and distribution of reserve land which the decree granted tribal chiefs; and he pointed to the need to limit the government's right of expropriation for public works.⁹⁴ In fact, the minister's intentions seem to have been entirely the reverse of Guillain's: the former wanted opportunities for exploitation of Melanesians to be in the hands of free settlers rather than the administration. His reasoning was in

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Min. to de la Richerie, 'Instructions générales remises à M. Gaultier de la Richerie, Gouverneur de la Nouvelle-Calédonie et dépendances' (draft), 13 June 1870: ANOM, Carton 25.

line with that of most colonists, who agitated for the individualization of Melanesian land holdings and the removal of barriers to their alienation in the belief that the bulk of the reserves would then pass into European hands.⁹⁵ Guillain's legislation was intended to thwart just such a possibility.

In the event, however, Melanesians were spared the depredations of rapacious settlers only to fall victim to a far more rapacious and more irresistible predator - the colonial government. In view of later occurrences, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the local administration's much vaunted concern to protect Melanesians from unscrupulous colonists, however genuine as far as du Bouzet was concerned, had by the mid 1870's, and perhaps even as early as the late 1860's, become a means, more authoritarian than humanitarian, to ensure that control over land and the exploitation of Melanesians remained entirely in the hands of the government.

DURING the 1870's the restricted land rights which Melanesians had been granted by Guillain's legislation were eroded by an administration eager to acquire land for penal colonization. A 'cantonnement decree' of 6 March 1876 paved the way for inroads into the 'immutable' reserve land with a clause permitting the revision of boundaries in accordance with

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E.g., Moncelon 1885:5-6.

changes in the numerical strength of tribes - which during the remainder of the nineteenth century and well into the next almost invariably diminished. The application of cantonnement procedures in the region of La Fwa and Burai precipitated mass murder of Europeans in June - September 1878, and a prolonged war of repression. The commission set up to inquire into these events pointed to the wholesale expropriation of tribes, and the ravages of European livestock as prime causes of the insurrection.⁹⁶ Nothing was done to redress earlier wrongs, however, and during the repression whole tribes and clans were dispossessed and their members deported en masse to Belep and the Isle of Pines.

Again, in the late 1890's a government-sponsored attempt to promote agricultural settlement by free colonists led to the further application of cantonnement by Governor Feillet. The often tenuous connection which still existed between the reserves and the traditional territory of tribes was effectively destroyed by wholesale resumption of reserve lands and the arbitrary resettlement of tribes on the

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A. de Trentinian, 'Rapport sur les causes de l'insurrection canaque en 1878', 4 Feb. 1879: reproduced in Dousset 1970: 127-59; cf. Anova-Ataba, who suggested that such grievances were symptoms of a far more fundamental cultural and psychological incompatibility between Europeans and Melanesians: 'la raison donc principale, à notre avis, de l'insurrection c'est l'impossibilité de dialogue entre deux civilisations et deux cultures hétérogènes' (Anova-Ataba 1969:207).

traditional lands of other groups.⁹⁷ With the development of cash-cropping in the second quarter of the twentieth century, tensions became acute between traditional masters of the soil and immigrants, whose land rights depended entirely on the generosity of the original owners. The latter were and are far less disposed to grant the long-term usufructuary rights needed for the cultivation of crops such as coffee, than they had been to allow short-term subsistence cropping.⁹⁸

Since the Second World War Melanesians have emerged from the strait-jacket of second-class citizenship to which they had been condemned by nineteenth century paternalism and oppression and early twentieth century neglect. They are now playing an increasingly important role in the social, political and economic life of New Caledonia. Paradoxically the European innovation of common ownership of land became the new orthodoxy, and the recent desire of younger, better educated Melanesians to break down the collective principle and free reserve land from the iron grip of the chiefs and the elders have met with little success. After the deprivations of the Feillet era the reserves remained inviolate, but inalienability and collective ownership under

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Saussol 1971:234-6.

98

Bélouma 1958-9: 21-2.

the authority of the chiefs have become a handicap to Melanesian economic development in a capitalist society which in recent years has become increasingly fixated on mineral exploitation for the livelihood of most of its members. Furthermore, the reserves are now unable to cope with Melanesian population increase, which in the last few decades has far outstripped that of other ethnic groups. Individual Melanesians have begun to acquire land outside the reserves, as Europeans increasingly abandon the agricultural and pastoral industries. The possibility of large-scale Melanesian enterprise in these fields is the best hope for genuine diversification of the island's economy, and for meaningful Melanesian participation in the future of the land which they have at last begun to share with those who took it from them.

CONCLUSION

NO other Melanesians demonstrated anything like the capacity of New Caledonians to organize concerted resistance to the threat posed to their lands and way of life by European political control and agricultural and pastoral settlement. Throughout most of Melanesia, excluding Fiji, the possibility of effective armed opposition to European encroachment was negated by political fragmentation and the bitter rivalries of local groups. In New Caledonia, however, sufficient regional cohesiveness existed to enable the clans and tribes of a wide area to carry out a series of more or less simultaneous and coordinated attacks which caused the death of nearly two hundred Europeans in June-September 1878. On a smaller scale, Bwarat and Kawa's several 'northern coalitions' exemplified the same tendency. In this case the common enemy was the missionaries and Christians of Pwebo, who before 1862 represented to most of the tribes of the north the epitome of French occupation. Again in 1868-9 shared resentment at oppression suffered at the hands of the colonial administration caused most of the clans of three large inland tribes to unite in an attempt to force the Europeans from their territory. As will be seen, this tendency both aided and retarded Melanesian efforts to resist the conquest of their territory.

The tendency to united action should not be over-emphasized, since local loyalties were almost always paramount, coalitions were generally loose and allies often unreliable, except where their personal interests were concerned. Furthermore, in no case, including 1878, can any more than regional consciousness be discerned. But the examples cited, and others which lie beyond the scope of this study, indicate a substantial degree of unanimity between local groups over a fairly wide area. Indeed, throughout the period to 1870 the French administration was almost continuously at war with a succession of dissident groups of clans and tribes. The geographical location of the areas of unrest receded inland in the face of stern military repression, until by 1870 an uneasy peace prevailed in the pacified areas, while the more uncompromising opponents of the colonial régime had been driven into the most remote and inaccessible parts of the island.

To the early administrators, the possibility of Melanesian coordination to oppose French rule seemed unlikely, and was far less interesting than the apparent fragmentation of New Caledonians into mutually antagonistic, frequently warring local groups, 'tribes' in administrative parlance. Thus Tardy de Montravel expressed the opinion that: 'cette grande variété d'intérêts, ces haines de tribu à tribu ... peut servir dans le début si l'on sait en tirer parti en opposant les unes aux autres'.¹ Du Bouzet offered an even more optimistic

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Tardy de Montravel to Min., 27 Apr. 1854: ANOM, Carton 40, CG 1854.

appraisal of the incapacity of Melanesians to make common cause against the European invasion of their lands, and also pointed to the advantages which the French could expect to achieve from a policy of 'divide and rule':

Heureusement, toutes ces tribus sont divisées par d'anciennes haines, et, parlant des langues tout à fait différentes, sont incapables de se réunir. Presque partout, et avant peu, nous aurons pour auxiliaires, contre les tribus voisines, celles dont nous occupons le territoire. 2

From the examples suggested above, and those analysed in the body of this work, it will be seen that the first part of du Bouzet's prognostication was drastically inaccurate. On the other hand, his expectation that French arms would obtain useful support from Melanesian auxiliaries was vindicated beyond his most extravagant hopes. The seeming paradox is elucidated by reference to a phenomenon whose importance was often overlooked by early observers: namely, that the apparent fragmentation of the small kinship units at the base of New Caledonian social organization was transcended by complex networks of reciprocal obligations, enmities, alliances, trading

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Du Bouzet to Min., 14 Feb. 1855b: ANOM, Carton 40, CG 1855; see also Min. to Durand, 18 Feb. 1860: ANOM, Carton 25; Durand to Min., 26 May 1860: ANOM, Carton 42; Forget to Min., 15 June 1860: Collection Margry; de la Hautière 1869:69-70.

and marriage patterns extending over whole regions. This tendency was best exemplified by the partition of the clans and tribes of the far north between the mutually antagonistic phratries known as Oot and Waap.³ The ramifications in the culture contact situation of this and other divisions meant that few incidents involving Melanesians and Europeans could have purely local implications, especially in the case of violent opposition to missionary influence or to European encroachment on to tribal lands.

Neither Tardy de Montravel nor du Bouzet was unaware of the existence in the north of patterns of permanent allegiance or enmity between tribes. Du Bouzet actually referred to the division by name: '... les diverses tribus ... se groupent seulement en deux confédérations connues sous les noms de Ot et de Uanap'.⁴ Du Bouzet, however, did not see the groupings so formed as anything more than unstable military confederations, and he missed entirely the ritual significance of the dichotomy. He also failed to foresee that the existence of the division would help determine regional patterns of acceptance or rejection of European penetration. This does not necessarily imply that the patterns so formed followed traditional lines of demarcation. It does suggest, however, that New Caledonians

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See above, pp.34-8.

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Du Bouzet to Min., 20 June 1855: ANOM, Carton 40, CG 1855; see also Tardy de Montravel to Min., 27 Apr., 25 Dec. 1854: *ibid.*, CG 1854; Vieillard et Deplanche 1863:21.

had a tradition of collaboration with clans and tribes beyond their immediate locality, and explains why groups were prepared to play an active role in affairs which did not directly concern them.

The other side of the same coin, however, lay in the fact that Melanesians fighting with the French showed a similar capacity for united action, and, for example, warriors from Kone, Yengen and Wagap, each group resident more than fifty kilometres from the others, could operate together with reasonable efficiency as auxiliaries of the French. It would be difficult to overemphasize the importance of Melanesian auxiliaries in the pacification of New Caledonia. Often armed with muskets, and with a knowledge of country and traditional modes of fighting unmatched by Europeans, they provided the only really effective means by which intransigent groups in remote areas could be made to feel the weight of military repression - which generally consisted of plunder and destruction of dwellings and gardens, a task to which the auxiliaries applied themselves with enthusiasm, especially when the dwellings and gardens in question belonged to hereditary enemies.

In practice, however, the allegiances and antagonisms of the Oot/Waap dichotomy were not always maintained under the stress of culture contact and colonization. Local considerations were always important, and the old patterns sometimes broke down in the face of the new needs, power relationships and jealousies which resulted from the presence of Europeans,

especially missionaries and representatives of the colonial régime. This tendency was exemplified by the oscillating loyalties of the Puma, a Waap tribe, during the 1850's and 1860's. In the late 50's they fought with the French and their own former enemies, the Mwelebeng of Pwebo, against their kinsmen, the Yengen, who were also Waap. This action resulted from a purely pragmatic assessment of the current balance of power in the region, and the realization of the Puma that for them the alternative to obedience was repression and dispersion. After Guillain's arrival, however, the changed relationship between government and mission destroyed the unnatural dominance which the Mwelebeng had built up in the region, and enabled the Puma to revert to an earlier pattern of allegiance, while at the same time they continued to serve as the instruments of government policy. For the remainder of the decade they filled the presumably satisfying role of allies of the French in conjunction with the Yengen and other Waap groups, and enjoyed frequent opportunities to harass and sometimes fight against their ancient enemies.

Indeed, during the 1860's the Oot/Waap dichotomy regained much of its former validity, in the main as a result of Guillain's anti-missionary stance. The administration's allies in the north-east were all Waap, while most of the tribes which felt the weight of official disapproval and military action, both Christian and pagan, were Oot. It is thus evident that the customary alignment of the northern

clans and tribes, while not universally applicable under the colonial régime, remained an important factor. Its existence helps explain why armed conflict between Melanesians and French forces in the north so often involved fighting between loosely-structured Melanesian coalitions. The tragedy as far as Melanesians were concerned lay in the fact that their sense of regional consciousness was as much a divisive as a cohesive force. The French, however limited their understanding of the intricacies of the Oot/Waap dichotomy, knew only too well how to turn it to their own advantage, and were prepared to be quite unscrupulous in so doing.

THE theme of this work can be summed up as 'exploitation', in the non-emotive sense. It is a record of successive attempts by white and brown men, both individually and in groups, to use the other to their own advantage, whether pecuniary, political or, in the case of the missionaries, spiritual. Melanesians encouraged missionaries and traders to settle in their tribes because they hoped to benefit from their presence. In some cases, as at Balad in 1847, their resort to violence can be attributed, at least partially, to disappointment and frustration at the failure of their expectations to materialize. On the evidence of the case studies presented, such frustrations were less likely to arise with traders than with missionaries. The demands made on Melanesians by the former were generally not onerous, and both parties enjoyed an ideal economic relationship, each believing that it had got

something for nothing; i.e., from the point of view of the Melanesian, that he had exchanged a quantity of worthless aromatic wood or sea slugs, plus his own labour, for valuable and prestigious goods like iron, axes, knives, beads, cloth, and an occasional musket and ammunition.

Missionaries, on the other hand, not only made much more serious demands, but offered much less immediate and tangible rewards. Their teachings presupposed radical changes in the way of life, customs and entire belief system of Melanesians, and struck at the very bases of the indigenous society. For instance, missionaries separated the physical from the spiritual universe, which to Melanesians were inseparable. They insisted on a renunciation of polygamy, of belief in magic and of veneration of ancestral spirits, which were all fundamental parts of Melanesian culture, as, respectively, a mark of prestige, a means of social control and a pious and utterly necessary duty to the dead and living generations. The missionaries also attempted to inculcate an ethic of achievement through personal effort rather than through group virtue. In the process, they tried to destroy the genuine reciprocity of traditional relationships, by which each man shared his 'brothers'' property and shared his own property with his 'brothers', and replace it with an authoritarian system of centralized production and distribution under chiefly authority. If they dissimulated their real aims, missionaries were generally tolerated, in the expectation that they would ensure a supply

of European goods. But failure to meet these expectations caused mistrust and resentment amongst Melanesians, while missionaries could in any case rarely compete on equal terms with traders in this regard, even had they wanted to do so. The greatest handicap which missionaries faced, however, was the equation which Melanesians often drew between Christianity and death, an equation based on the empirical evidence that disease seemed to be highest where missionaries had settled, and that Christians and supporters of the mission suffered most from its effects.

It is therefore scarcely surprising that before 1860 missionary success was slight, except in areas where they had managed to win to their cause an important and prestigious chief. They were almost always strenuously opposed by the dignitaries - elders, sorcerers, war chiefs, renowned craftsmen and the like - who customarily shared social control with the chiefs, and who suspected, rightly, that the missionaries aimed both to enhance chiefly authority at the expense of other leaders, and/or invalidate the traditional raison d'être of the latter. Chiefs had most to gain, in terms of increased temporal power, from exploitation of missionaries, but the latter could only hope to profit from the support of chiefs who enjoyed sufficient authority to be able to override, or at least neutralize, the opposition of the other dignitaries and the apathy of most tribesmen towards the new teachings. Indeed, association with a weak

or unpopular chief, such as Bweon of Puma, was a positive disadvantage, because it aroused the resentment of his rivals and their followers, and caused them to remain aloof. At Pwebo and the Isle of Pines, however, the cooperation of a powerful chief provided the missionaries with the eventual opportunity to extend their influence throughout the tribe; but even in these cases chiefly support did not guarantee immediate success, and a long struggle, and the intervention of external factors, was necessary before the traditionalist opposition could be reduced to sullen subservience.

Throughout the pre-annexation period Melanesians generally held the upper hand in the process of mutual exploitation, by virtue of their immense numerical superiority and their confidence in the continuing validity and efficacy of traditional methods and answers. Annexation brought no sudden change, but the seeds were sown of an altered balance in relationships between Melanesian and European. As French domination was relentlessly extended, Melanesians found it increasingly necessary to compromise with the new realities created by the presence of an opponent whose power could not be effectively resisted anywhere near the coast, and whose ability to strike into the interior steadily developed. Melanesians rapidly lost the initiative with the extension of the area of pacified territory and were pushed into the position of reacting to the stimuli of others, rather than of acting on their own terms. Marist missionaries, free settlers and colonial administrators all aimed either to

convert Melanesians, to conquer them for the sake of their most valuable property, land, or to mould their institutions to suit European convenience. Melanesians, who had no such ambitions with regard to Europeans, except in the limited sense of sometimes coveting an individual's goods, were forced on to the defensive in every place where they were within the effective range of French arms.

Despite the dependent role for which they were intended, and into which they were inexorably forced, many Melanesians managed to compromise successfully; i.e., they continued to exploit the presence of Europeans to their own advantage, at the same time as they changed their ways and institutions to meet at least minimum European requirements. I have previously presented three case studies of Melanesian efforts to meet the challenge posed by European domination. Each in its way exemplified a particular response, and no stereotype existed, but all demonstrated a studied appreciation of where power actually lay, and a sometimes unavailing determination to make the most of a situation which was by its very nature unfavourable.

The traditional weakness of the Puma tribe provided a paradox. At first intra-tribal dissension gravely compromised their ability to meet European penetration successfully. After an initial period of confusion, however, the chiefs' consciousness of physical inferiority caused them to analyse local power relationships with care, to such effect that after 1856 the Puma were always on the winning

side, be it Christian Mwelebeng or anticlerical colonial administration.

The Mwelebeng chiefs, on the other hand, read aright the advantages which they would gain from cooperation with the missionaries. They used Marist help and advice and the goodwill of the fledgling colonial government to extend Tinjin authority far beyond its traditional limits. They were so blinded by their own success, however, that they failed totally to come to terms with changing circumstances after 1862. Unlike the Puma, who learned from hard experience that mission and government were not identical, the Mwelebeng made this distinction too late, and were in any case too committed to the mission to be able to change camps, and they suffered accordingly.

Similarly, the chiefs of Yengen were at first blinded by their own power, and by the successful way in which they had for ten years controlled their dealings with Europeans. They too learned from experience, and later benefited from changed relationships between Europeans. As far as the Yengen were concerned, of course, the mission/government conflict was a fortuitous occurrence, quite beyond their control. Nonetheless, they used it skilfully to their own advantage, and cannot be regarded as mere puppets of the administration. Credit is due to Guillain for his appreciation of how he could best use traditional antagonisms between Melanesians, but the element of manipulation was not one-sided, since both the governor and his allies made

concessions to secure the other's support.

In other ways, however, Melanesians were manipulated to serve the convenience and the planning of Europeans, pre-eminently in the sphere of chiefly authority and land tenure. Several chiefs, especially Bonu of Mwelebeng, must bear a heavy share of responsibility for European misconceptions about these institutions, because they willingly cooperated with missionary reforms in these areas, despite powerful opposition from within their own tribes. Similarly, Bwarat, however much he respected traditional sanctions in internal tribal matters, encouraged the official misinterpretation of his role and his authority. It is a vexed question just how far the European redefinition of chiefly authority and Melanesian land tenure was deliberate distortion. It was certainly conscious policy on the part of the missionaries, but the question of motives is more confused as far as the administration was concerned. What is certain is that the changes implemented were wholly to the government's advantage, and to that extent the question of intent is academic. It is almost invariably true that the earliest European descriptions of the traditional society were far more accurate than those of later observers. In part the declining accuracy reflected changes which had already occurred; in part it reflected fixed European prejudices about what Melanesian society should be like. Men like Mathieu and Guillain depicted a simplistic form of social organization, and proceeded on the basis of their own preconceptions to

accuse Melanesians of lack of sophistication and subtlety, as in regard to land tenure. Many Europeans refused to acknowledge the possibility of complexity in the pre-literate society. On this basis they stressed chiefly tyranny and simple communal ownership of land because both concepts fitted their own grossly oversimplified version of what 'savage' society was like. It is difficult, in the light of the foregoing, to conclude otherwise than that many Melanesians, perforce because they were the weaker party, had by the 1860's achieved a far more subtle insight into European motivations and the workings of European society than had most Europeans into the traditional society. Sadly, in the decade after 1870, Melanesian efforts to come to terms with their conquerors were doomed to failure, because to the latter they had become at best irrelevant, and at worst a positive hindrance to progress, and all that that implied.

APPENDIX I

COMMANDANTS AND GOVERNORS OF NEW CALEDONIA, 1853-1870¹

<u>NAME</u>	<u>RANK</u>	<u>POSITION</u>	<u>FROM</u>	<u>TO</u>
Auguste Febvrier des Pointes	Rear-admiral	C.-in-C., Pacific station	23 Sept. 1853	31 Dec. 1853
Jean Joseph de Brun	Commander	S.N.O., New Caledonia (commander of the <u>Prony</u>)	31 Dec. 1853	9 Jan. 1854
Louis Tardy de Montravel	Captain	S.N.O., New Caledonia (commandant, Indo-China sub-division)	9 Jan. 1854	31 Oct. 1854
de Brun			31 Oct. 1854	18 Jan. 1855
Joseph du Bouzet	Captain	Governor, Etablissements français de l'Océanie (Marquesas, Tahiti, New Caledonia)	18 Jan. 1855	July 1855 ²

1

This appendix is based on miscellaneous letters in ANOM and ANM, on the Bulletin officiel and on O'Reilly 1953: passim.

2

Du Bouzet left Nouméa for Papeete in July 1855, before returning to France for an official enquiry into the shipwreck of the Aventure in New Caledonian waters in March 1856.

<u>NAME</u>	<u>RANK</u>	<u>POSITION</u>	<u>FROM</u>	<u>TO</u>
Edouard Le Bris	Commander	<u>Commandant supérieur,</u> New Caledonia	July 1855	3 May 1857
du Bouzet			3 May 1857 ³	c. 10 May 1858
Jules Testard ⁴	Major, Marine Infantry	<u>Commandant particulier,</u> New Caledonia	c. 10 May 1858	c. Sept. 1858
du Bouzet			c. Sept. 1858	25 Oct. 1858
Testard			25 Oct. 1858	21 Dec. 1858
Jean Durand	Major, Marine Infantry	<u>Commandant particulier</u>	21 Dec. 1858	22 May 1859
Jean Saisset	Captain	Governor, E.F.O. ⁵	22 May 1859	3 Apr. 1860

3

Du Bouzet returned to Tahiti from France on 29 December 1856.

4

Testard was appointed commandant particulier 19 January 1855 , and was replaced by Durand on his own request by décret impérial of 15 September 1858.

5

Saisset was appointed governor by décret impérial of 19 May 1858, he arrived in Papeete 18 September 1858, but did not visit New Caledonia until the following year.

<u>NAME</u>	<u>RANK</u>	<u>POSITION</u>	<u>FROM</u>	<u>TO</u>
Durand			3 Apr. 1860	July 1860 ⁶
Durand	Lieutenant Colonel	<u>Commandant</u>	July 1860	2 June 1862
Charles Guillain	Captain ⁷	Governor, New Caledonia	2 June 1862	15 Mar. 1870 ⁸
Jacques Ruillier	Lieutenant Colonel, Marine Infantry	Interim governor	15 Mar. 1870	26 Aug. 1870

6

A décret impérial of 14 January 1860 separated New Caledonia from the E.F.O., promoted Durand and appointed him commandant of the colony; this took effect in July.

7

Guillain was promoted rear-admiral 4 May 1868.

8

Guillain's replacement as governor, Captain Gaultier de la Richerie, was appointed by a décret impérial of 11 June 1870.

APPENDIX II

LIMITED RESOURCES AND ITS IMPACT ON THE ADMINISTRATION
OF NEW CALEDONIA, 1853-1870.

THROUGHOUT the period 1853-1870 the administrators of New Caledonia were bedevilled by the problem of insufficient funds, personnel and material to fulfil the demands of a growing colony, and, after 1864, penal settlement. Until its administrative separation from French Oceania in 1860 New Caledonia had to compete for limited resources with the protectorate, while the distance between Port-de-France and Papeete caused delay and inefficiency.¹ Almost every report by the early governors and commandants of New Caledonia complained of difficulties created and aggravated by inadequate resources.² Chief among these difficulties was the fact that the French occupation had until 1862 to be virtually confined to the southern third of the colony; elsewhere Melanesian opposition could at best be contained by an occasional expedition, but in the more remote areas it flourished unchecked, and isolated missionaries, settlers and

1

Du Bouzet to Min., 4 Dec. 1857: ANM, BB4 723; Testard to Min., 29 Aug. 1858: ANOM, Carton 42.

2

E.g., du Bouzet to Min., 25 Oct. 1857: ANOM, Carton 42; Saisset to Min., 20 Nov. 1859: *ibid.*; Durand to Min., 31 Aug. 1860: *ibid.*

traders could not be adequately protected. Only the most limited public works programme could be implemented at Port-de-France, but even this further reduced the effective military strength, since soldiers had to be used as labourers.³

Before the arrival of Guillain in 1862 only a few desultory attempts were made to utilize Melanesians for the benefit of the colony. In 1857 a small company of native soldiers was set up, to act as scouts and guides during expeditions, and for miscellaneous duties around the main centres, Port-de-France and Napoléonville (Kanala).⁴ In 1859 a regular courier service, manned by allied tribes, was organized between these two settlements.⁵ The Melanesian company was finally disbanded in 1864 because, with the increase under Guillain in the number of Melanesians employed on public works, the existence of a separate group organized on military lines seemed unnecessary.⁶ Later, in the mid-sixties, two troops of thirty tirailleurs, recruited from allied tribes and armed with muskets, were attached to the Wagap and Gatop posts to aid in the suppression of the insurgent tribes

3

Du Bouzet to Min., 25 Oct. 1857: ANOM, Carton 40, CG 1857; see also Guillain, 'Rapport', [1868]: APM/ONC, 22.

4

'Décision du Gouverneur ...', 26 May 1857: ANOM, Carton 69; [Foucher] 1890:59.

5

'Décision du Gouverneur ...', 4 Aug. 1859: BO 1859-60:154.

6

'Décision du Gouverneur...', 25 Jan. 1864: BO 1864: 25.

of central and northern New Caledonia.⁷

Guillain's main contribution to solving the manpower shortage was to conscript Melanesians on an organized basis. Before his arrival it had been believed that they would never voluntarily agree to regular work for the administration or colonists, because of innate laziness and lack of motivation: '... gens très sobres, ne sachant se créer aucun besoin, ne comprenant pas même celui de se vêtir, et partant, entièrement ordonnés à la paresse'.⁸ Guillain avoided this difficulty by making it obligatory on every pacified tribe to send a regular contingent of workmen to Port-de-France. They were engaged for twelve months, paid a small wage, fed, clothed and housed, and were punished if they attempted to defect. It was hoped that this measure would meet the colony's requirements for unskilled labour, and at the same time help civilize the Melanesians involved.⁹ Within two years, however, insufficient funds forced the virtual suspension of this scheme,¹⁰ although local corvées continued at the military posts, often under very onerous conditions.

After 1865 an attempt was made to ease the labour shortage by the introduction of New Hebridean indentured workers.

7

Patouillet 1872:50.

8

Durand to Min., 26 May 1860: ANOM, Carton 42.

9

'Décision du Gouverneur portant que des indigènes seront engagés pour travailler, à titre de manoeuvres, sur les chantiers du Gouvernement', 19 Jan. 1863: BO 1863:15-16.

10

Guillain to Min., 3 Sept. 1865: ANM, BB4 847.

By early 1867 nearly two hundred had been imported and engaged by colonists on short-term contracts. But the answer did not really lie in this direction, as New Caledonia was not a popular work place with New Hebrideans, and labour traders from Port-de-France attracted recruits with difficulty.¹¹ It was also hoped that the arrival of convicts in 1864 would ameliorate the situation, but Guillain's policy of penal colonization meant that few prisoners were available for use on public works and settlers generally could not afford to employ them. Furthermore, although the penal establishment formed a virtually autonomous state within the state, with its own budget and personnel, its excessive demands on both money and manpower no doubt drained resources which would otherwise have gone to the free colony; conversely, of course, New Caledonia would probably not have been developed by the French at all had it not been intended for use as a penal settlement.

During 1860 the shortage of resources, human and monetary, became so acute as to cause the abandonment of the Balad post, drastic cutbacks in public works and a reversal of Governor Saisset's ambitious programme of military intervention against recalcitrant tribes.¹² In August 1860, after the

¹¹

Mon., 6 Jan. 1867; Caldwell [c.1871]: 5.

¹²

See above, p.121.

separation of New Caledonia from Tahiti had taken effect, the Marine Infantry garrison was more than doubled to a total of four companies (472 men), and during 1861 a disciplinary company also arrived.¹³ But no further increase occurred for nearly eight years,¹⁴ despite the requirements of an expanded administration and Guillain's energetic policies for the pacification and development of the colony. In July 1866 there were only 706 European troops of all services in the colony - this included a small force of gendarmerie and an artillery detachment, as well as the Marine Infantry and the disciplinary company.¹⁵ Even in 1860, however, lack of money nullified much of the good effect of the increase in personnel.¹⁶

Guillain's arrival in June 1862 signalled the beginning of a new era, when the previously limited and aimless development of the colony was channelled and given new purpose and direction. The colony's budget was greatly enlarged,¹⁷ and the annual metropolitan subsidy on which its finances depended was increased to 300,000 francs. According to Guillain,

13

Min. to Durand, 15 Mar. 1860 (draft): ANOM, Carton 25; Durand to Min., 31 Aug. 1860: ANOM, Carton 42; Rougeyron to Procureur, 28 June 1861: APO.

14

Mon., 17 May 1868; Guillain, 'Rapport', [1868]:APM/ONC, 22.

15

Mon., 30 Sept. 1866.

16

Mon., 6 Jan. 1861; Durand to Min., 8 Mar. 1861: ANOM, Carton 42.

17

Mon., 8 June 1862.

18

Guillain, 'Rapport', [1868]:APM/ONC, 22.

however, the budget was already inadequate for the colony's needs. It became more so as the pace of governmental activity quickened, and the European population increased,¹⁹ and tended more and more to settle in outlying areas amongst turbulent and often unpacified Melanesians. Early in 1866, however, with war clouds gathering in Europe, a ministerial decree reduced the subsidy by 83,000 francs. This necessitated the closure of the government's school for Melanesian boys²⁰ and further restriction of the already limited public works programme. Not long before, one of the two steam sloops on the poorly equipped local naval station had been recalled to France.²¹ This drastically weakened the administration's ability to strike quickly in the more remote parts of the colony, where sea transport was vital, and where the perils of reef-clad shores made steam vessels invaluable. Henceforth communications, never reliable, became chaotic: for instance, it took thirteen days for news to reach Nouméa by trading vessel of the uprising at Pwebo in October 1867; a year later news of another uprising in the north took a similar time to reach Nouméa by land from Pwebo.²²

19

The European civilian population increased fourfold between 1862 and 1869, although the rate of increase slowed after 1866, and the total in July 1869 was still less than 1,500: 'Tableau de la population blanche au 1^{er} juillet 1866': Mon., 30 Sept. 1866; 'Division de la population blanche par cultes et par nationalités', 1 July 1869: ANOM, Carton 172.

20

'Arrêté du Gouverneur ...', 10 Apr. 1866: Mon., 15 Apr. 1866.

21

Guillain to Min., 23 May, 3 Sept. 1865: ANM, BB4 847.

22

Mon., 21 Oct. 1867, 25 Oct. 1868.

Upheavals in the north in 1867-8 necessitated, in Guillain's eyes, an energetic policy of repression. The reinforcements which arrived in May 1868 were insufficient to cope with the added demands imposed by new military posts at Uvanu, Ubac and Bonde, and numerous expeditions in strength during late 1868 and 1869.²³ The insurgent tribes were finally quelled, however, and the governor left for France in March 1870, sick and somewhat disillusioned, but satisfied that he had done all he could with the means available.²⁴ But the tide of opinion and circumstances in France had turned against him. After 1866 French foreign policy had suffered repeated setbacks in Europe and Mexico, and by early 1870 Louis-Napoléon, Guillain's patron, had lost much of his absolute power. Guillain received few plaudits from his superiors, and the instructions given to his successor reflected official disapproval with the expense and brutality of his policies.²⁵ In the straitened circumstances of 1870, troops, ships and money could simply not be spared for the needs of a tiny antipodean colony. The new governor, Captain Gaultier de la Richerie, withdrew most of his forces from northern New Caledonia. The posts at Gatop, Wagap, Ubac and Bonde were abandoned, while only a small garrison was left at

23

Guillain to Min., 9 May 1869: ANOM, Carton 26, CG 1865-9; 27 Aug. 1869: ANOM, Carton 166.

24

Guillain to Min., 11 Mar. 1870: ANOM, Carton 26, CG 1865-9.

25

Min. to de la Richerie, 13 June 1870 (draft): ANOM, Carton 25.

Uvanu.²⁶ Nonetheless, it was in part Guillain's success in crushing resistance and implanting a solid respect for French arms in this region which made de la Richerie's withdrawal possible, and which transformed the French foothold on the colony into firm possession.

26

Anon., 'Nelle Calédonie, Situation au 23 7bre 1870'
(draft): ANOM, Carton 26, CG 1865-9; Mon., 17 May 1871.

APPENDIX III

MARIST ESTIMATES OF MELANESIAN SUPPORT FOR THE MISSION, 1862-1871¹

	<u>SEPT. 1862²</u>	<u>OCT. 1863⁴</u>	<u>1865⁵</u>	<u>FEB. 1868⁶</u>	<u>APR. 1871⁷</u>
PRACTISING CHRISTIANS	4,200 ³	4,609	} 5,000	c. 7,000	7,009
CATECHUMENS	4,000	2,230		1,056	
AUDITORS	2,900	2,640	} 6-7,000		308
WELL-DISPOSED PAGANS	c. 6,000	4,000			
TOTAL	c. 17,100	13,479	11-12,000	c. 7,000	8,373

1

These figures are reproduced purely as an indication of the Marists' estimate of their situation. There is no suggestion that they were necessarily accurate.

2

Rougeyron to Supérieur-général, 29 Sept. 1862: APM/ONC, 20.

3

Adult Christians.

4

Rougeyron to Supérieur-général, 21 Oct. 1863: APM/ONC, 20.

5

Forestier to the Conseil de l'Oeuvre de la Sainte Enfance, [1865]: APM/ONC, 20. Those well-disposed towards the mission were said to have been about one-quarter of the total Melanesian population.

6

Rougeyron to Yardin, 26 Feb. 1868: APM/ONC, 20. This report gave no figures for catechumens or auditors. They were said to have been neglected for several years as a result of Guillain's campaign.

7

Rougeyron to Cardinal Barnabo, 18 Apr. 1871: APM/ONC, 16. The total Melanesian population was said to have been about 50,000.

ABBREVIATIONS

Adm.	Admiralty.
<u>AMO</u>	<u>Annales des Missions d'Océanie.</u>
ANL	Australian National Library, Canberra.
ANM	Archives Nationales, section Marine.
ANOM	Archives Nationales, section Outre-Mer.
<u>APF</u>	<u>Annales de la propagation de la foi.</u>
APM/ONC	Archivio di Padri Maristi/Oceania - Nova Caledonia.
APO	Archives of the Province of Oceania.
AVNC	Archives de l'Archevêché de la Nouvelle-Calédonie.
<u>BO</u>	<u>Bulletin officiel de la Nouvelle-Calédonie.</u>
CG	Correspondance générale.
CO	Colonial Office.
FO	Foreign Office.
Guiart 1968: Notes	Information given orally and in note form to me by Professor Guiart in Paris in August-November 1968.
Min.	Minstre de la Marine et des Colonies (except during the period 24 June 1858 - 24 November 1860, when the <u>Département des Colonies</u> was placed under the <u>Ministère de l'Algérie et des Colonies</u>).
ML	Mitchell Library, Sydney.
<u>Mon.</u>	<u>Moniteur de la Nouvelle-Calédonie.</u>
PRO	Public Record Office.

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2. Series CC (Personnel):

- a. Sub-series CC3 (Troupes et équipages): The following cartons were consulted: 1061-8, 1127, 1843, 1848, 1853, 1859, 1867.
- b. Sub-series CC7 (Dossiers personnels des officiers): for Jean-Joseph de Brun, Joseph du Bouzet and Charles Guillain.

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Padri Maristi. Archivio di Padri Maristi, Rome.

The section ONC ('Oceania, Nova Caledonia') was read for the period 1842-70. The following files contained relevant material (the marginal numbering system is my own):

1. 5 Ca 180. 'Potestas civilis executiva':
 - a. 'Lettres de l'administration civile locale, 1855-8.'
 - b. 'Lettres de l'administration civile locale, 1859-63.'

2. TS copies of missionary journals (originals in AVNC).
 - a. Villard, J.M., 'Rapports sur les bienfaits et grâces reçus de la Très Sainte Vierge', 9 Sept. 1889.
 - b. Goujon, Prosper and Palazzy, François, 'Journal de l'île des Pins', October 1866-25 Feb. 1871.
 - c. Palazzy, François, 'Journal de l'île des Pins', 1 Jan. 1865-13 Sept. 1866.
 - d. Villard, J.M., 'Journal de Pouébo', 10 Aug. 1867-16 Feb. 1868.
 - e. [Emprin, A.], 'Notes particulières', [Bonde, 1869].
3. 'Propriétés et biens de la mission de la Nouvelle-Calédonie.'
4. 5 Ca 334. 'Relationes laicorum.'
5. 418.1. Correspondence with the General Administration of the Société de Marie:
 - a. Douarre, correspondence 1842-7.
 - b. Douarre, correspondence 1848-53.
 - c. Rougeyron to Supérieur-général, 3 Sept. 1846.
 - d. Rougeyron, correspondence 1855-63.
 - e. Rougeyron, correspondence 1864-5.
 - f. Rougeyron, correspondence 1866-8.
 - g. Rougeyron, correspondence 1869-73.
6. 411:
 - a. Rougeyron, miscellaneous letters.
 - b. Rougeyron, 'Circulaires'.
7. Forestier, correspondence:
 - a. Forestier to Yardin, 1866-7.
 - b. Yardin to Forestier, 1864-7.
 - c. Supérieur-général and Forestier, correspondence, 1864-7.
8. 'Potestas civilis' (miscellaneous documents).
9. Miscellaneous documents.
10. 'Le clergé colonial, 1862-95.'
11. 'Démêlés avec le Gouverneur Guillain, 1863-9.'
12. 5 Ca 200. 'Historia' (J. Coste, 'Premières mentions de la Nouvelle-Calédonie dans les documents du Saint-Siège et de la Société de Marie').
13. 5 Ca 201. 'Typonographiae' (chronology of the mission).
14. 5 Ca 210. 'Personae' (TS biographical notes on the New Caledonian missionaries).

15. Unclassified dossier:
 - a. 'Papiers administratifs.'
 - b. 'Documents concernant, semble-t-il, le Gouverneur Guillain', (mostly undated).
 - c. 'Documents semblant se rapporter à "l'affaire des fusils", 1864.'
16. Rougeyron, correspondence with Propaganda.
17. 'Administration' (Anon., 'Directoire ou guide pour les missionnaires du vicariat', 27 June 1870).
18. 'Historiae I.'
19. '1862-1916. Relationes.'
20. 'Rapports I' (Rougeyron, reports on the state of the mission, 1861-72).
21. 'Activité missionnaire.'
22. 'Massacres de Pouébo, 1867-8.'
23. Unclassified dossier:
 - a. 'Les îles Loyalty.'
 - b. 'Affaire du R.P. Lambert, 1865-7.'
24. 'Administration civile.'
25. 'Gouverneur Guillain, 1862-9.'
26. General correspondence:
 - a. 1845-9.
 - b. 1850-2.
 - c. 1853.
 - d. 1854-6.
 - e. 1857.
 - f. 1858.
 - g. 1859.
 - h. 1860.
 - i. 1861.
 - j. 1862-3.
 - k. 1864.
 - l. 1865.
 - m. 1866.
 - n. 1867-8.
 - o. 1869.
 - p. 1870-1.
27. 5 Ca 100 (Laurence, 'Note sur les propriétés de la mission en Nouvelle-Calédonie et, éventuellement, sur celles de la Société de Marie.' TS).

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Box 21:

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Box 25:

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